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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 6th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 12 October 2001, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Hasmy ..... (Malaysia)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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01-57825 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

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Agenda item 94: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*) (A/56/88)

1. **Mr. Chaudhry** (Pakistan) said that decolonization was one of the main inspirations of the founding Members of the United Nations, as illustrated by Chapter XI of the Charter of the United Nations; it was therefore important to intensify efforts to combat colonialism and foreign occupation. He welcomed the progress made in several Territories, including New Caledonia, Western Sahara and East Timor. However, although there was a growing realization among the administering Powers that freedom could not be denied to a people indefinitely, some continued to claim that the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories had accepted the existing arrangements; the truth of that assertion should be verified by independent observers or through a referendum organized under the auspices of the United Nations.

2. Over the past 56 years, significant progress had been made under the aegis of the United Nations, but many peoples continued to be denied freedom by foreign occupying forces. Palestine and Kashmir were two glaring examples. However, although there had been ongoing discussions on the question of Palestine, no meaningful dialogue had taken place with regard to Kashmir for over half a century. Contrary to what some might contend, it was absolutely clear that Kashmir could not be considered an integral part of any country. In 1947, India itself had acknowledged that that there was a dispute about the status of Kashmir and had committed itself to organizing a plebiscite on the subject. All parties were in agreement on that point, which was also embodied in the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. Pakistan considered that the attempts to confuse the right to self-determination with terrorism besmirched the memory of the architects of the independence of many countries, particularly in southern Asia. Kashmir was fighting against foreign subjugation, domination and exploitation, a right that was recognized by the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

3. Pakistan condemned terrorism and considered that both individuals and States that committed acts of terrorism should be combated. The fight against terrorism should be extended to those who used the State apparatus to trample on the fundamental and inalienable rights that the Declaration sought to protect. Pakistan had consistently supported decolonization and self-determination and was strongly committed to a final settlement of the Kashmir dispute that respected the wishes of the people of Kashmir and the pertinent resolutions of the Security Council. It urged the interested parties to do their utmost to resolve the current impasse.

4. **Mr. Muchetwa** (Zimbabwe) deplored the fact that the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism had not led to the complete eradication of colonialism. The right to self-determination was a fundamental right and no one could be deprived of it. It was particularly important to provide adequate information to the peoples who had to make political decisions.

5. He welcomed the involvement of the United Nations in East Timor and the progress made by that Territory on its road towards independence. He called for the continued involvement of the United Nations in

the process of decolonizing the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories in order to ensure that that process was seen as fair by the peoples of the colonial Territories.

6. Zimbabwe, which had itself suffered from colonialism, denounced the delaying tactics being used to prevent the holding of a referendum in the Western Sahara and called for a speedy implementation of the Baker agreement that had been endorsed by the two parties to the conflict. The United Nations should impose sanctions on any of the parties that failed to comply with that Agreement. He appealed to the developed countries to use their influence to bring an end to a situation that endangered peace and security in the region.

7. Zimbabwe rejected the argument that there was no difference between terrorists and freedom fighters. The actions of the former were criminal in nature, while the latter fought for the recognition of their right to self-determination.

8. **Mr. Oyarzun** (Spain) said that the United Kingdom and Spain had addressed the practical issues relating to cooperation and sovereignty during the ministerial meeting convened on the question of Gibraltar on 26 July 2001 within the framework of the Brussels Declaration of 1984. The two parties were determined to reach a rapid settlement on the question to the satisfaction of both parties. Spain, like the United Kingdom, favoured the participation of the people of Gibraltar in the negotiations and invited the Prime Minister of Gibraltar to attend the next ministerial meetings. As far as the declarations made by the Prime Minister of Gibraltar and Mr. Bossano before the Fourth Committee were concerned, Spain's position on the conflict had not changed, as the Special Committee must have noted from the statement made on 18 June 2000 by the Spanish delegation.

9. **Mr. Ri** Kyong Il (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said it was not normal that 40 years after the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, many territories were still under the yoke of colonialism because of their strategic location and their natural resources. It could not be claimed that outright annexation or the granting of limited autonomy by the administering Powers was the expression of the right to self-determination. That right must be based on respect for the history, culture and language of the peoples of the Non-Self Governing Territories. The administering Powers must really guarantee the equality and rights of self-determination of the colonial peoples, properly inform them about their rights, and agree to allow United Nations observers to visit the Territories. They should also commit themselves to political and social development and protect the natural resources of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Lastly, they should stop using those Territories as military bases. In that regard, his delegation supported the position of the Caribbean countries, which opposed military exercises organized in the region by the administering Powers. His delegation hoped that the question of Non-Self-Governing Territories would be settled through negotiations and in accordance with the principles laid down in the Declaration.

10. **Mr. Osei** (Ghana) said that the international community's inability to complete the process of decolonization in time had proved that it was necessary to review the existing mechanisms for and identify obstacles to decolonization.

11. Colonialism in all its forms undermined development and there could be no justification for its retention at the current stage of mankind's evolution. Ghana continued to support the right of colonial peoples to self-determination and called upon the administering Powers to respect that right and to give consideration to the fundamental rights as well as political and socio-economic interests of the people in the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

12. The Special Committee remained very relevant to the United Nations efforts to bring about a speedy conclusion to the decolonization process. The Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories observed during the Caribbean Regional Seminar had helped the Special Committee to publicize the situation in those Territories and to keep the issue alive at the international level.

13. The effective functioning of the Special Committee depended on the cooperation it received from the administering Powers. His delegation therefore welcomed the fact that formal and informal consultations were continuing between the Committee and the administering Powers with a view to determining the most suitable steps to be taken to allow the populations of those Territories to exercise their right to self-determination. He also welcomed the continuing cooperation between the Government of

New Zealand and the Special Committee on the question of Tokelau.

14. The Special Committee must continue to explore new ways of enhancing its effectiveness, including confidence-building measures that needed to be taken in order to improve its ongoing dialogue with the administering Powers, such as more frequent consultations between the two sides.

15. Turning to the question of Western Sahara, he said that Ghana continued to uphold the right of the Saharan people to self-determination and found it regrettable that, despite the efforts of the facilitators, the settlement plan which would have paved the way for a referendum had ended in a deadlock. All parties involved in the conflict should demonstrate flexibility and be willing to compromise in order to overcome the deadlock.

16. The success of the recent elections in East Timor had proved what the collective will of the international community could achieve. Cooperation between the Special Committee and administering Powers, and between the latter and the Non-Self-Governing Territories, should take place in that spirit.

17. **Mr. Semakula Kiwanuka** (Uganda) said that the international community should seize the opportunity provided by the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism to steer the Non-Self-Governing Territories towards the road to independence without further delays. His delegation rejected the excuse advanced by some administering Powers that most of the Non-Self-Governing Territories were too small to administer themselves; it believed that the peoples of those Territories must decide for themselves whether or not they wished to be federated with larger entities.

18. Noting that, in its resolution 55/141, the General Assembly had supported the organization of a referendum for self-determination of the people of Western Sahara that was impartial and free of all constraints and had also urged the parties to the conflict to cooperate with the Secretary-General and MINURSO, he said that his delegation was disappointed by the slow progress on that issue and requested the parties concerned to seek an end to the conflict. Aware of the role played by the United Nations for more than 50 years, he invited it to continue to work for decolonization.

19. **Mr. Koonjul** (Mauritius) said that, on the founding of the United Nations in 1945, around 750 million people, or one third of the world's inhabitants, had been living in territories that were non-self-governing or dependent on colonial Powers. Less than two million people remained in those territories, which was a good indication of the progress achieved, and confirmation that the United Nations had played a vital role in the area of decolonization. However, there was still a lot of work to be done in order to realize the goals enshrined in the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Despite some progress in the decolonization process during the first International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, greater efforts should have been made in implementing the Plan of Action. Currently, at the start of the Second International Decade, there were still 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories under colonial control.

20. Mauritius, a former colony, believed that those living under colonial occupation had the inalienable right to self-determination, irrespective of the size of the territory, its geographical location or its endowment in natural resources. The United Nations and the international community as a whole had the obligation to facilitate the decolonization process, for which the cooperation of the administering Powers was essential.

21. In East Timor, the relentless efforts of the United Nations and the international community, coupled with the strong determination of the East Timorese people had finally paved the way for a self-governing and democratic East Timor. The high level of participation in the most recent elections was a good illustration of that indomitable drive for self-rule. The United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) was to be congratulated on contributing to the transition to self-government. A post-independence East Timor would be faced with pressing challenges, including peace-building and economic reconstruction. Prudent action should be taken in order to ensure that the people of East Timor could build on the achievements of the international community. He noted with satisfaction that the Security Council had already reiterated the importance of ensuring a substantial international presence in East Timor after independence.

22. The Saharan people, on the other hand, were still struggling for their right to self-determination, since Western Sahara remained the last Non-Self-Governing

Territory in Africa. It was imperative to bring the process of its decolonization to a speedy conclusion. The General Assembly, in its resolution 55/141, as in previous resolutions, had reiterated the need to settle the question of Western Sahara by implementing the settlement plan accepted by the Frente POLISARIO and the Kingdom of Morocco 10 years earlier which enjoyed the support of the international community to a large extent. The United Nations had since deployed MINURSO, in 1991, in order to prepare for the implementation of the settlement plan and to organize and conduct the much-awaited referendum.

23. It had not taken place, owing, in particular, to difficulties which had cropped up in the identification and appeal processes. The Frente POLISARIO had submitted proposals for a solution to the outstanding issues, which needed to be carefully examined in an open and constructive spirit. The Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General had also submitted proposals in the form of a draft framework agreement; however, the implementation of the settlement plan remained the only viable premise for a successful settlement of the question of Western Sahara unless the two parties reached a mutually acceptable alternative solution.

24. **Ms. Cedeño-Reyes** (Venezuela) said that her country was fully committed to the cause of decolonization and to the attainment of the objectives of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. As a member of the Special Committee on Decolonization, her country had always striven for the creation, among all parties, of a climate of understanding conducive to a fruitful dialogue for negotiations, and had supported or co-sponsored decisions and resolutions that had contributed to the attainment of substantial progress in the implementation of the 1960 Declaration.

25. In the context of the activities of the Special Committee, the importance of regional seminars and of visiting missions to Non-Self-Governing Territories should be emphasized. The information gathered in that way illustrated the close interrelationship between the political, economic and social variables in each Territory, and the study of those variables was essential to the better understanding of each case and the more accurate evaluation of the factors influencing the effective implementation of resolution 1514 (XV). That had been convincingly demonstrated by the recent regional seminar held at Havana.

26. The Special Committee and the entire international community should now join forces to evolve a well-conceived and better executed policy for removing the obstacles encountered during the preceding decade in implementing the resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly on that subject. In that context, the effectiveness of the future work of the Special Committee would depend on the support of the main actors and of the international community with respect to the pending issues. In that connection, the administering Powers had a special and unavoidable responsibility. Their cooperation with the Special Committee was crucial for the case-by-case consideration of the situation of the Territories in question.

27. Her country fully subscribed to the statement made to the Fourth Committee by the Chilean delegation on behalf of the members of the Rio Group but wished to add a few comments. On the subject of Western Sahara, a fair and impartial referendum should be held as soon as possible in compliance with the provisions of the 1991 settlement plan, which was the only mechanism accepted by the interested parties. As the representatives of the Polisario Front had stated that they did not accept the framework agreement proposed in the most recent report of the Secretary-General on that subject, the efforts made under United Nations auspices within the framework of the 1991 settlement plan should be continued.

28. Furthermore, with respect to the question of the Malvinas Islands, her country reaffirmed its support for the Argentine Republic's claim to sovereignty over the islands and again called on both parties to hold talks so as to arrive at a fair resolution of the dispute. The very high-level dialogue and the recent cooperation between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom might create the necessary conditions for such negotiations.

29. Finally, her country hoped that the United Nations would strengthen and improve its assistance to the Non-Self-Governing Territories, which thanks to the various programmes and activities of the Organization would make progress towards decolonization. The contacts and meetings that were to take place between the Special Committee on Decolonization and the Economic and Social Council would give an idea of the various ways in which policies in that connection might be pursued or developed.

30. **Mr. Hussein** (Ethiopia) said that the issue of decolonization required innovative and practical approaches in the search for a specific solution for each of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, subject to the expressed wishes of the population of those Territories, to the United Nations Charter and to General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and other relevant United Nations resolutions. It was to be hoped that the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism would see the complete eradication of colonialism and the final liberation of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories who would be free to choose their political, economic and social systems. In the twenty-first century, there should no longer be a single Non-Self-Governing Territory.

31. With respect to Western Sahara, which was the last African Territory remaining to be decolonized, his country strongly supported the Saharan people in its struggle for self-determination and commended the efforts of the Secretary-General, in collaboration with OAU, on behalf of the people of Western Sahara in accordance with the original settlement plan; his delegation was concerned, however, at the numerous problems relating to the implementation of the settlement plan. It therefore urged the two parties to cooperate fully with the Secretary-General, his Personal Envoy and his Special Representative in implementing the various phases of the plan and in overcoming the difficulties that remained despite the progress achieved.

32. **Mr. Villacis** (Ecuador) said that, since gaining its independence, his country had always adhered faithfully to the principles of international law and had consistently supported the right of peoples to self-determination. The General Assembly had reaffirmed that the existence of any manifestation of colonialism whatsoever was incompatible with the Charter of the United Nations and had supported the peoples that were subject to a colonial regime with a view to the exercise of their right to self-determination.

33. The efforts of the United Nations had resulted in considerable progress in the process of decolonization, as the number of Member States that had gained their independence over the past four decades attested. For that reason, his country reaffirmed its strong commitment to continuing cooperation in order to end colonialism in all its forms and manifestations.

34. Ecuador wholeheartedly endorsed the statement made by the Chilean delegation on behalf of the Rio Group concerning the Malvinas and East Timor. With regard to Western Sahara, he reiterated his support for the Saharan people in their just struggle to achieve complete independence. Ecuador therefore firmly supported the settlement plan accepted by Frente POLISARIO and the Moroccans, and regarded it as the only path to a peaceful solution. Implementation of the plan would make it possible to avoid a pointless confrontation between the parties and ensure peace in that part of Africa. Ecuador also hoped that the last traces of colonialism would disappear in the near future.

35. **Mr. Al-Zayani** (Bahrain) said that the fortieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples had provided an opportunity to reflect on the achievements of the United Nations in the field of decolonization. The Millennium Declaration had reaffirmed the role to be played by the Organization in that regard, which flowed from the Charter and the Declaration, and had also reiterated the international community's support for the right of peoples to self-determination. It had proved impossible to attain the main objective of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, but the United Nations could take pride in its achievements in that area as well as in many other areas where it was active. During the 40 years which had passed since the adoption of the Declaration, the United Nations had worked tirelessly to achieve the goals set out therein and in subsequent documents and resolutions. During that period, most colonialized peoples had been able to free themselves from colonial domination and establish independent States which had joined forces with the United Nations, particularly in the Special Committee. The latter had considered colonialism to be a violation of the Charter of the United Nations, of the Declaration itself and of the principles of international law and deemed it an obstacle to the development of international economic cooperation and of the social, cultural and economic cooperation of non-independent peoples. The United Nations had, in many resolutions reaffirmed its determination to attain the ultimate goal of eliminating colonialism by adopting the necessary measures. He hoped that that goal would be attained during the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

36. **Mr. Mwakawago** (United Republic of Tanzania) observed that, despite the progress made by the Special Committee since the adoption of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, much remained to be done if colonialism was to be totally eradicated, for 17 Territories had still not exercised their right to self-determination.

37. There was an urgent need to settle the question of Western Sahara and enable the people of the Territory to exercise fully their inalienable right to self-determination. His country hoped that the search for a lasting solution to the conflict would take place within the framework of the settlement plan approved by the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations. The Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism afforded the international community another opportunity to obtain sustainable results in that regard. His country welcomed the efforts made by the Special Committee to engage the administering Powers in a constructive dialogue and hoped that they would collaborate further with the Committee so that the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories could decide their future freely.

38. It was regrettable that the people of those Territories were not sensitized to the political options open to them in the exercise of their right to self-determination. His country therefore welcomed the convening of regional seminars such as the regional seminar for the Caribbean held in Cuba in May 2000, which had conducted a critical review of the political evolution of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and undertaken a sensitization process. The recommendations of the seminar could guide the work of the General Assembly on small island Non-Self-Governing Territories. It was in the interest of the United Nations to ensure the curtailment of military activities by the administering Powers in the Territories under their jurisdiction, as they ran counter to the rights and interests of the peoples of those Territories.

39. The remarkable achievements in East Timor gave reason to hope that the last vestiges of colonialism would soon disappear. It was also to be hoped that the Organization's fight against terrorism would not deflect it from pursuing the battle against colonialism.

40. **Mr. Moungara-Moussotsi** (Gabon) said that his country attached great importance to the question of Western Sahara, given its excellent relations with the Maghreb countries. Gabon had always advocated a peaceful and negotiated solution to the question and supported the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General to that end.

41. The new proposals of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, Mr. James Baker, constituted a further step towards a just and lasting settlement of the question of Western Sahara.

42. In that connection, his delegation supported the draft framework agreement on the status of Western Sahara and congratulated the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy on their work. He invited the parties to pursue their efforts in the spirit of openness that characterized the draft resolution before the Committee, A/C.4/56/L.2.

43. **Ms. Howe-Jones** (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, in response to the comments made in the meeting by the representative of Spain concerning Gibraltar, said that the British Government's position on the question remained identical to that expressed by the representative of the United Kingdom in the General Assembly on 14 September 2000. She thanked the representative of Spain for having drawn the Committee's attention to the resumption, on 26 July 2001, of the talks on Gibraltar between the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Spain and the United Kingdom and to the importance of the involvement of Gibraltar in the process. Like Spain, the United Kingdom wanted the Chief Minister of Gibraltar to participate in future ministerial meetings.

44. In response to the comments made by the representatives of Venezuela and Ecuador concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands, she emphasized that her Government's position on the issue was well known and had been set out in detail in the statement made in exercise of the right of reply in response to the statements of the representatives of Chile, Cuba and Uruguay in the Fourth Committee on 8 October 2001.

45. **Mr. Sinha** (India) said that his delegation categorically rejected the comments made by the representative of Pakistan regarding the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. The state of Jammu and Kashmir had been, was and always would be an integral part of India. It seemed that the representative of Pakistan was seeking to justify the cross-border terrorist acts perpetrated against India in the state of Jammu and Kashmir and in the rest of the country. In the context of

the tragic events of 11 September 2001, that attitude was particularly regrettable.

46. India's position concerning Palestine was well known and did not need to be repeated. It was somewhat surprising that the representative of Pakistan was attempting to link that issue to the question of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, which was the target of the most contemptible acts of terrorism.

47. Lastly, he welcomed the new information provided on the status of the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Tokelau.

48. **Mr. Estremé** (Argentina) said that his delegation found itself obliged to clarify its position on the question of the Malvinas Islands, since the representative of the United Kingdom had twice referred to that question during the debate on decolonization. Argentina had no doubt as to its right to sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia, the South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding waters.

49. In that connection, he was grateful to all those delegations that had manifested their support for Argentina during the debate, including the delegations of Chile (on behalf of the Rio Group), Uruguay (on behalf of the South American Common Market (MERCOSUR)), Cuba, Venezuela and Ecuador.

50. Those statements demonstrated that the hemisphere was interested in finding a solution to the question of sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands through bilateral negotiations between Argentina and the United Kingdom; that was also the solution favoured by the United Nations. The General Assembly and the Special Committee on Decolonization had adopted numerous resolutions calling for a negotiated settlement of the dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom. Argentina was ready to see such negotiations through to a successful conclusion with a view to achieving a speedy solution to the question.

51. **Mr. Chaudhry** (Pakistan) thanked the representative of India for having pointed out the reference to Tokelau. There had been a typographical error, and the reference should have been to Tuvalu. His delegation had informed the Secretary of the Committee and the error had been corrected.

52. His delegation did not wish to initiate a polemic. It had simply wished to recall certain facts that were a matter of record and could be verified by all and to reaffirm the noble aspirations of the region's leaders. It believed that there was a need to encourage a speedy solution to the question in order to advance peace and stability in the region.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 7th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 16 October 2001, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Hasmy ..... (Malaysia)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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01-58166 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 18: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (*continued*)

Agenda item 91: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations (*continued*)

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Agenda item 94: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*)

Draft resolution on the question of information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations (A/56/23, chapter XIII, section A)

1. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, San Marino, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Spain, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Venezuela, Yugoslavia, Zambia.

Against:

None.

Abstaining:

France, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

2. *The draft resolution was adopted by 86 votes to none with 3 abstentions.*

3. **Ms. Howe-Jones** (United Kingdom) said that her country, as in previous years, had abstained in the vote on the draft resolution. The United Kingdom did not take issue with the main objective of the resolution and would continue to meet its obligations fully in respect of its overseas Territories.

4. However, the final decision as to whether a Non-Self-Governing Territory had reached a level of self-government sufficient to relieve the administering Power of the obligation to submit information under Article 73 (e) of the Charter lay with the Government of the Territory concerned and its administering Power, not with the General Assembly.

Draft resolution on economic and other activities which affect the interest of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, submitted under agenda items 92 and 18 (A/56/23, chapter XIII, part B)

5. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mexico, Myanmar, Namibia, Netherlands,

New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, San Marino, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Spain, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yugoslavia, Zambia.

Against:

United States of America.

Abstaining:

France, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

6. *The draft resolution was adopted by 94 votes to 1, with 2 abstentions.*

Draft decision on military activities and arrangements by colonial Powers in Territories under their administration, submitted under agenda items 92 and 18 (A/56/23, chapter XIII, part H)

7. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Bahrain, Belarus, Bolivia, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Cyprus, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gambia, Ghana, Guyana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Myanmar, Namibia, Oman, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Singapore, Sudan, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Zambia.

Against:

Andorra, Armenia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Yugoslavia.

Abstaining:

None.

8. *The draft resolution was adopted by 55 votes to 40.*

9. **Mr. Schelstraete** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the European Union had for some years maintained a dialogue with the Special Committee on decolonization with the aim of building a broader consensus. It acknowledged the progress achieved in the work of the Special Committee over the past few years and hoped that the latter would continue its efforts to ensure that it submitted balanced texts capable of attracting broad support.

10. Regrettably, as in previous years, the European Union was compelled to reiterate its objections regarding the draft decision on military activities, since the question covered by the draft decision fell outside the Committee's competence. Accordingly, the member States of the European Union had voted against the draft decision.

Draft resolution on implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations, submitted under agenda items 93 and 12 (A/56/23, chapter XIII, part C)

11. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Bolivia, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Ghana, Guyana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mexico, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, New Zealand, Oman, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Sudan, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Tunisia, United Arab

Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia.

Against:

None.

Abstaining:

Andorra, Armenia, Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Yugoslavia.

12. *The draft resolution was adopted by 65 to none, with 40 abstentions.*

13. **Mr. Schelstraete** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the European Union renewed its support for the specialized agencies in their efforts to offer assistance to Non-Self-Governing Territories in the humanitarian, technical and educational fields. At the same time, the mandates of those agencies must be scrupulously respected, and that was why the member States of the European Union had abstained in the vote on the draft resolution.

14. **Mr. Lewis** (Antigua and Barbuda) said that his delegation had voted in favour of the resolution just adopted because it served as the mandate for the United Nations system to provide assistance to the Non-Self-Governing Territories. The Economic and Social Council continued to adopt a similar resolution on the issue. A review of the implementation of resolutions on that issue indicated that much remained to be done. Most United Nations bodies still had not strengthened existing measures of support or formulated concrete proposals to that effect, as had been called for repeatedly in those resolutions. The number of reports on the implementation also remained insufficient.

15. His delegation noted that in the medium-term plan it was stated that assistance from the specialized agencies to the Non-Self-Governing Territories was coordinated by the secretariat of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. That coordination function would be better discharged by an agency, such as the United Nations Development Programme, which had a proven track record in assisting the Territories, so that the secretariat could focus on the mandate which the General Assembly had given it, including the initiation of long-delayed action on the unimplemented Plan of Action for the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

16. He regretted that the Minister of State for External Affairs of the United States Virgin Islands had decided not to address the Fourth Committee on the agenda item under discussion, after encountering unprecedented and unacceptable difficulties. The valuable information provided to the Committee over the past decade or more by that territorial Government had helped to formulate many of the most relevant paragraphs of the resolution. Because of the absence of the representative of that Government, the resolution on the specialized agencies reflected little if any new information.

17. His delegation was concerned that the lack of consensus on the specialized agencies resolution was almost accepted as routine, as was also the case in the Economic and Social Council. The Committee and the Council should take a close look at what constituted objectionable language in the resolution, so that consensus could be achieved in that most important area.

Draft resolution on offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories, submitted under agenda item 94 (A/C.4/56/L.3)

18. **The Chairman** said that Jamaica had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

19. *The draft resolution was adopted.*

Financial implications of draft resolutions

20. **Ms. Wilkinson** (Secretary of the Committee), referring to the recommendations of the Special Committee contained in its report (A/56/23, chap. XIII, D-F), said that their implementation would not give rise to additional costs or programmatic changes to the proposed programme budget for the 2002-2003 biennium. Implementation of paragraphs 12 and 13 of draft resolution A/C.4/56/L.2 would also be without financial implications for the regular budget.

Draft resolution on the question of Western Sahara, submitted under agenda item 18 (A/C.4/56/L.2)

21. **The Chairman** said that the word "in" should be replaced by the word "and" in the twelfth preambular paragraph of the English text.

22. *The draft resolution, as orally revised, was adopted.*

23. **Mr. Diop** (Senegal) said that his delegation joined in welcoming the adoption without a vote of the draft resolution which had been made possible by the spirit of cooperation demonstrated by all delegations and had given rise to new hopes. His delegation supported the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy aimed at incorporating the key elements of a political solution to the question of the territory's status in the draft Framework Agreement on the Status of Western Sahara.

24. His delegation did not doubt that the Committee, in view of the deadlock surrounding the question of the referendum, would seek to strengthen the new momentum for peace by fully supporting the highly laudable efforts of the Security Council and by encouraging the parties, in a spirit of good will, to pursue the talks aimed at achieving a political solution based on the draft Framework Agreement.

25. **Mr. Bennouna** (Morocco) noted that the new elements in the draft resolution just adopted were in line with the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to identify an alternative to the Settlement plan, which was currently in deadlock. His delegation also noted the General Assembly's appeal to the parties to abide by their obligations to release without further delay all persons detained in camps.

26. His delegation also expressed the hope that in the interests of achieving a political solution, those participants in the talks that had not yet done so would clarify their position concerning the draft Framework Agreement on the Status of Western Sahara proposed by the Secretary-General, and that they would proceed to its implementation. In a spirit of good will and under the auspices of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, Morocco continued to be willing to hold negotiations, with a view to their successful conclusion in the interests of the entire Maghreb region.

27. **Mr. Baali** (Algeria) said that the adoption by consensus of the draft resolution on the question of Western Sahara again testified to the unwavering support of the international community for the Saharan people in their efforts to realize their inalienable right to self-determination through a free and impartial referendum without administrative or military interference in the affairs of Western Sahara.

28. The adoption of the resolution had been preceded by a rich and substantial debate at which many delegations had strongly reiterated their support for the cause of the people of Western Sahara and their desire for full realization of the settlement plan, which represented the only framework for resolving the Western Sahara conflict that had the agreement of both parties and the support of the international community.

29. As in past years, the Committee had reaffirmed the responsibility of the United Nations towards the people of Western Sahara in resolving the matter in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples. Having urged both parties to the conflict to cooperate closely with the Secretary-General and his representatives in the implementation of the settlement plan drawn up under the auspices of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity, the Committee had reaffirmed the central role and binding nature of the plan in achieving a just and lasting settlement of the question of Western Sahara.

30. His delegation welcomed the fact that that important resolution had been adopted by consensus, thereby sending a clear signal that there was a pressing need for the peace process in Western Sahara to be concluded and for those responsible for implementing the process to comply with the mandate entrusted to them by Member States.

Draft resolution on the question of Gibraltar, submitted under agenda item 18 (A/C.4/56/L.4)

31. *The draft resolution was adopted.*

Draft resolution on the question of New Caledonia, submitted under agenda item 18 (A/56/23, chapter XIII, section D)

32. *The draft resolution was adopted.*

Draft resolution on the question of Tokelau, submitted under agenda item 18 (A/56/23, chapter XIII, section E)

33. *The draft resolution was adopted.*

Draft resolution on the questions of American Samoa, Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Guam, Montserrat, Pitcairn, St. Helena, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the United States Virgin Islands, submitted under agenda item 18 (A/56/23, chapter XIII, section F)

34. *The draft resolution was adopted.*

35. **Ms. Howe-Jones** (United Kingdom), speaking in explanation of position, said that, as in previous years, the United Kingdom had joined the consensus on the draft resolution.

36. Her delegation shared the Committee's concern about the problem of unemployment on St. Helena, and she drew the Committee's attention to the joint action of the United Kingdom and the Government of the Territory in that regard. The United Kingdom had set up a pilot fund to support economic diversification and improve employment prospects in its overseas territories and was currently discussing the terms of the fund with the St. Helena Government. Her delegation welcomed the call to continue discussions with the representatives of Pitcairn on how best to support the economic security of the Territory.

37. **Mr. Oyarzun** (Spain) said that his delegation had joined the consensus on all the draft resolutions submitted. It supported the principle of self-determination for all the Territories on which resolutions had been adopted.

38. The principle of self-determination was not, however, the sole principle which could be applied to the process of decolonization of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. In the case of some Territories, including Gibraltar, it was appropriate to apply the principle of territorial integrity, in accordance with the concept expressed in various General Assembly resolutions.

39. **Mr. Thapa** (Nepal), **Mr. Ri** Kyongil (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) **Mr. Al-Harthy** (Saudi Arabia), **Mr. Maitland** (South Africa), **Mr. Clodumar** (Nauru), **Mr. Okio** (Congo) and **Mr. Ngoh Ngoh** (Cameroon) said that, had their delegations been present when the vote was taken on the drafts submitted under agenda items 91 to 93, they would have voted in favour.

40. **Mr. Graveley** (Dominican Republic), **Mr. Guani** (Uruguay), **Mr. Yahya** (Djibouti), **Mr. Theron** (Namibia) and **Mr. Ouattara** (Burkina Faso) said that, had their delegations been present when the vote was taken on the draft resolution submitted under agenda item 91, they would have voted in favour.

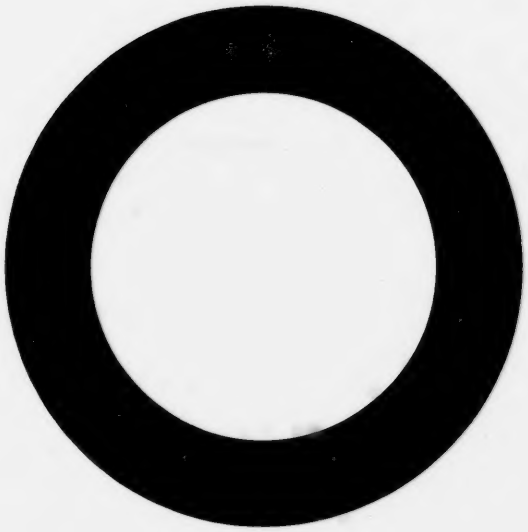
41. **Mr. Kaid** (Yemen) said that, had his delegation been present when the vote was taken on the draft proposals submitted under agenda items 91 and 92, it would have voted in favour.

42. **Mr. Stuart** (Australia) said that, had his delegation been present when the vote was taken on the draft resolutions submitted under agenda items 91 and 92, it would have voted in favour. As for the draft resolution submitted under agenda item 93, it had intended to vote in favour but by mistake had pressed the wrong button.

43. **Ms. Howe-Jones** (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply to the statement by the representative of Spain, reiterated the position of the United Kingdom on the question of Gibraltar, which its representative had stated on 14 September 2000.

44. **The Chairman** said that the Committee had thus concluded its discussion of the agenda item on decolonization. He noted that there had been a fruitful exchange of views and that in most cases consensus had been reached, indicating the importance which the majority of delegations attached to the question of decolonization.

The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.



United Nations A/C.4/56/SR.8

General Assembly
Fifty-sixth session

Official Records

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 8th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 17 October 2001, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Hasmy ..... (Malaysia)

Contents

Agenda item 85: Effects of atomic radiation

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01-58488 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 85: Effects of atomic radiation (A/56/46, with scientific annex, and A/C.4/56/L.5)

1. **Ms. Wilkinson** (Secretary of the Committee) said that the footnote on the first page of draft resolution A/C.4/56/L.5 should read: "See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 49* (A/55/49), vol.I". Also, in the preambular part, the footnote reference should be placed after the phrase "of 8 December 2000".

2. **Mr. Cordeiro** (Brazil), introducing the report on the work of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation at its fiftieth session (A/56/46), in his capacity as Chairman of the Scientific Committee, said that the Committee made an important contribution to evaluating the effects of radiation on populations and the environment at the regional and global levels. The 2001 report examined the hereditary effects of ionizing radiation and included an evaluation of multifactorial diseases, such as diabetes and hypertension. The Committee's task was to disseminate information to researchers around the world and to provide scientific assistance to countries suffering from the effects of ionizing radiation. Its reports served as a basis for the drawing up of national and international standards for protection against the effects of ionizing radiation. Since the establishment of the Committee in 1955, the sources of atomic radiation had multiplied and many radionuclides were being released into the environment by nuclear power plants and as a result of their use in medicine, agriculture and industry. There was also a growing awareness of the existence of natural radiation sources. The complexity of the issues discussed by the Scientific Committee made it necessary to raise the level of public awareness about the effects of atomic radiation and to continue the search for rapid and viable solutions.

3. He wished to introduce draft resolution A/C.4/56/L.5 and to announce that France, India and Ireland had joined the list of co-sponsors. He hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus, as in previous years.

General debate

4. **Mr. De Loecker** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey, and, in addition, Norway, said that the work of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation was authoritative and was generally used as a basis for drafting national and international standards to protect populations against the effects of atomic radiation. He welcomed the publication of the report of the Scientific Committee on the hereditary effects of atomic radiation, which was a very important addition to the previous year's report that had evaluated the risk from direct exposure to radiation. The 2001 report showed that hereditary risks were much lower than the risk of fatal cancer following direct exposure to radiation. The European Union supported the programme of work that had been adopted by the Scientific Committee, particularly the studies on the health effects of the Chernobyl accident, which should be published in 2005. It also welcomed and encouraged the cooperation between the Committee and the World Health Organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the International Commission on Radiological Protection and the International Commission on Radiation Units and Measurements.

5. **Mr. Datsenko** (Ukraine) welcomed the report of the Scientific Committee and the scientific annex thereto concerning the hereditary risks of radiation. His delegation attached particular importance to the study of the effects of radiation, particularly in view of the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl 15 years earlier. The Government of Ukraine was taking consistent steps towards mitigating the consequences of that disaster. In order to fulfil its international commitments and to strengthen the global nuclear safety regime, it had decided to close the Chernobyl nuclear plant on 15 December 2000, despite the economic and social constraints.

6. His delegation noted with satisfaction the submission by the Scientific Committee of its programme of work and supported the activities designed to discover more about the medical, social, psychological and environmental consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. It was important for the Scientific Committee to strengthen its collaboration with scientists from interested Member States. Ukrainian scientists would continue to cooperate with the Scientific Committee on issues such as the effects of low radiation doses on biological species and ecosystems, dynamic changes in health records and the

epidemiology of cancerous tumours and leukaemia in affected adults and children. Careful studies of the reliability of the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone would also be made with a view to assessing the need for additional safety measures.

7. The membership of the Scientific Committee had risen from 15, when it had been established in 1955, to its current level of 21, while the membership of the United Nations had risen from an original 76 to 189. He therefore urged the Special Political and Decolonization Committee to consider increasing the membership of the Scientific Committee. His country had the capacity to make a valuable contribution to the work of the Scientific Committee, given the considerable experience it had acquired in the area of radiation research.

8. **Mr. Ling** (Belarus) said that his country supported the activities of the Scientific Committee and hoped that they would continue to be based on a strict observance of the mandate as provided for by the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, and to display objectivity and impartiality while taking the widest possible account of the opinions of all interested parties. His delegation had examined with great interest the report of the Scientific Committee and the scientific annex thereto and believed that it would make an important contribution to enhancing the understanding of the international community of the various effects of atomic radiation on mankind and the environment. Given the experience it had acquired following the Chernobyl disaster, Belarus was an important partner of the Scientific Committee. His delegation welcomed the programme of work which the Scientific Committee had submitted and, noting with appreciation that it intended to continue the studies on the radiological effects of the Chernobyl accident, pledged its cooperation.

9. His delegation had noted with great interest the observations made by the representative of Ukraine on the strengthening of the role of the Scientific Committee, particularly through an increase in its membership. It was important that the interests of States that had emerged during the 1990s should be taken into account in its work. In that connection, he called for a constructive exchange of opinions on the points raised by the representative of Ukraine.

10. **Mr. Mehta** (India) said that his delegation, which had actively participated in the activities of the Scientific Committee, was pleased once again to be a sponsor of the draft resolution. It welcomed the highly professional work of the Scientific Committee, and said that it was reassured by the conclusions of its 2001 report on the hereditary effects of radiation. It had never been demonstrated that radiation exposure caused hereditary effects in human beings. Advances in molecular genetics and the sequencing of the human genome would contribute to the improved understanding of structural and functional changes in the genes that underlay hereditary disease. Gains had also been made in the evaluation of the risk of multifactorial diseases such as coronary disease and diabetes. The Scientific Committee had used the double dose method for the calculation of risk, which had revealed that, for the population exposed to radiation in one generation only, the risk to progeny of the first post-radiation generation was estimated to be 3,000 to 4,700 cases per gray per one million. That constituted only 0.4 to 0.6 per cent of the baseline frequency of such disorders in the human population.

11. However, there were still several uncertainties in the estimations of risks owing to the lack of reliable data and the complexity of the biological systems. The increasing flow of new information on genomes should help to resolve some of the uncertainties and it was hoped that those new developments would be reflected in the Committee's future programme of work.

12. The proposed work programme indicated both the continuation of the earlier work on the health effects of the Chernobyl accident, as well as the intention to evaluate the data on radon in homes and mines, and to carry out epidemiological studies on diseases other than cancer. He welcomed the fact that the Scientific Committee had established close collaboration with scientists from the Member States most affected by the Chernobyl accident.

13. India continued to be interested in the effects of high-level natural background radiation on the human population and other living organisms and hoped that such studies would find their rightful place in the Scientific Committee's report.

14. **Mr. Shebani** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that nuclear pollution was a serious current problem, one to which his country paid great attention because of the danger it represented for present and future generations. One of the objectives of the international organizations was to achieve international cooperation

to eliminate the risk of radiation throughout the world. His country was deeply concerned about the increase in nuclear radiation from nuclear reactors, especially in the Middle East, and asked that all the necessary and mandatory safeguards should be taken and that no new nuclear reactors should be built in the region.

15. In spite of the many appeals from the international community to Israel to make the region a nuclear-free zone, Israel refused to allow IAEA to inspect its nuclear facilities. It also refused to provide any information about the radiation from its facilities, which posed a threat to the population of the region. Before some disaster occurred, the international community must therefore take steps to compel Israel to submit its nuclear facilities to IAEA inspections.

16. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya hoped that regional and international efforts to use nuclear science for peaceful purposes would be stepped up for the benefit of humanity and that information would be exchanged among States concerning nuclear radiation, in order to protect against the risks involved.

17. Although there was a gleam of hope in the fact that some States had renounced nuclear testing and had taken steps to safeguard the transport and storage of nuclear waste, additional measures were needed to counter the threat.

18. The danger faced by humanity and the environment lay in the nuclear warheads which some States possessed; no new nuclear reactors must therefore be constructed, especially in the military field. All States must cooperate with a view to ending their nuclear research and testing. The Scientific Committee, which was to be congratulated on its most recent report, must continue to fulfil its mandate.

19. **Mr. Takahashi** (Japan) said that his Government attached great importance to the work of the Scientific Committee, which reviewed the exposure of the world's population to radiation from all sources. It particularly appreciated the comprehensive reports it prepared, which enabled the international scientific community and Governments to assess the effects of radiation on the population and the environment. His delegation supported the work of the Scientific Committee and valued the cooperative relationship which it maintained with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

20. His delegation was a sponsor of the draft resolution now before the Committee because it was convinced that the work of the Scientific Committee in collecting, structuring and disseminating radiological information was of great importance in a world that was increasingly reliant on nuclear technology. It hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

21. It was the policy of the Japanese Government to promote the safe and peaceful uses of nuclear energy, through both bilateral and multilateral cooperation. As the only country to have suffered a nuclear attack, it was determined to use its wealth of experience in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy for the benefit of humanity. Such uses were not confined to the production of nuclear energy, but extended also to the application of radioisotopes for industrial, agricultural, medical and other purposes.

22. Early in 2001, Japan had established a Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency, under the auspices of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, to oversee the safety regulation of all facilities and activities involving the use of nuclear power as a source of energy. The strengthening of the Nuclear Safety Commission had further improved the effectiveness of Japan's nuclear energy safety regulations.

23. Together with UNDP, Japan, which was concerned with the health of the population in the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan, had convened the Tokyo International Conference for Assistance to the Semipalatinsk region, held in September 1999. As a follow-up to that Conference, and in cooperation with the Government of Kazakhstan, it had undertaken a survey to assess the effects of radiation on the health of the people of the Semipalatinsk region.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.

United Nations A/C.4/56/SR.9

General Assembly
Fifty-sixth session

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 9th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 18 October 2001, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Hasmy ..... (Malaysia)

Contents

Agenda item 85: Effects of atomic radiation (*continued*)

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01-58729 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 85: Effects of atomic radiation (*continued*) (A/56/46, A/C.4/56/L.5; United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation 2001 report to the General Assembly, with scientific annex (Hereditary effects of radiation))

1. **Mr. Kasemsarn** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that, since its inception, the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation had vigorously conducted research and analysis on the effects and risks of atomic radiation for mankind and the environment. Its valuable contribution had deepened international awareness of the enormous risks of exposure to atomic radiation from both natural and man-made sources.

2. ASEAN welcomed the Scientific Committee's report and its annex on the hereditary effects of radiation. However, in order to fulfil its noble tasks and responsibilities, the Scientific Committee needed the support of all Member States and of other United Nations bodies, as well as international organizations.

3. The proper and safe usage of nuclear energy could be one of the options for generating power for production and national development of some countries. Along with the socio-economic benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, however, there were huge risks to the health and quality of life of people and the environment. The nuclear catastrophes of the recent past bore evidence of that. A balance therefore needed to be struck between using cheap alternate sources of energy on the one hand and protecting the health of peoples and the environment on the other. Now, more than ever, it was important for developed countries to extend assistance to developing countries, particularly through technology transfer, for the peaceful use of nuclear energy in a safe and sustainable manner.

4. It was also crucial that greater efforts should be made at all levels to conform with the internationally accepted safety standards or the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards in all matters relating to the use and handling of radioactive materials.

5. The ASEAN member countries called for the elimination of all nuclear weapons in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. In the light of the recent terrorist activities, every precaution must be taken to prevent nuclear technology and materials from falling into the wrong hands.

6. ASEAN reiterated its call to all nuclear-weapon States to accede to the Protocol to the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone.

7. **Mr. Haggag** (Egypt) expressed appreciation to the Scientific Committee for its report and noted the high quality of its publications, which served as a basis for the work of international, regional and national bodies in the area of the protection of the population from the effects of atomic radiation. The comprehensive study on the topic "Hereditary effects of radiation" was also of very high quality.

8. Bearing in mind the variety of the effects of atomic radiation and the dangers associated with the use of atomic energy, research must be continued in that area and protective measures must be taken. In that connection, Egypt welcomed the programme of work adopted by the Scientific Committee at its fiftieth session. Since the use of atomic energy could have significant advantages in the most varied spheres, developing countries must be given access to nuclear technologies without preconditions or restrictions. At the same time, in the context of Egypt's urgent appeals for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, his delegation drew attention to the threat to the security of Egypt and neighbouring countries deriving from the Israeli nuclear reactor. Israel continued to refuse to place that reactor under international control.

9. Egypt was once again sponsoring the draft resolution on the item under consideration and hoped that it would be supported by all delegations.

10. **Mr. Paolillo** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Common Market of the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR) and the associated countries Bolivia and Chile, noted the important and growing role of nuclear energy in agriculture, industry and medicine, particularly in the developing countries. At the same time, though, it was impossible to overlook the enormous danger radiation sources represented for the planet and all its inhabitants. In that connection, it was necessary to mention that in the area of atomic energy States bore collective responsibility not only for

the transfer of resources but also for the exchange of all information on the effects of atomic radiation.

11. He noted with satisfaction the objective approach of the Scientific Committee towards its research work as well as its new initiatives in the area of revealing and evaluating sources of radiation. The high degree of professionalism of members of the Committee confirmed the conclusions set out in its report, particularly with regard to the hereditary risks of radiation exposure and the risk of multifactorial diseases. Once again that testified to the importance of having objective and independent analytical data on atomic radiation and its effect on the gene pool and the environment. The member countries of MERCOSUR supported all initiatives that had been taken to assess possible risks and to improve existing mechanisms of regulation and protection.

12. The members of MERCOSUR and the associated countries reaffirmed their steadfast resolve to continue using atomic energy exclusively for peaceful purposes. That policy, along with the declaration of the South Atlantic as a zone of peace, was directed towards achieving the main aim of the countries of the region, which consisted of improving the socio-economic situation of their peoples, as was demonstrated by the fact that the member countries of MERCOSUR had signed numerous international agreements on the exchange of nuclear materials and technologies.

13. **Mr. Fallouh** (Syrian Arab Republic), noting that the threat related to nuclear weapons had grown in recent years, said that it was increasingly urgent to seek new ways of combating the danger, including on the basis of continuing research, exchanging information and strengthening the safeguards regime. In that connection, it had to be emphasized that the peaceful use of nuclear energy could bring mankind enormous benefits, particularly in medicine, industry and agriculture, in the interests of raising people's standard of living, especially in the developing countries.

14. Significant progress had been made in recent years as a result of the Scientific Committee's efforts in studying the effects of radiation and assessing its risks. His delegation had studied with great interest the current report of the Scientific Committee and appealed for the development of effective cooperation with that Committee and among interested agencies of the United Nations system. Dealing with nuclear radiation was all the more effective when all the measures agreed on a multilateral and non-discriminatory basis were implemented in strict compliance with IAEA safeguards.

15. His delegation called on the agencies of the United Nations system to make it a priority in their work plans to give developing countries technical assistance in overcoming the difficulties which hindered their acquisition of the necessary technology for the peaceful use of nuclear energy and thereby to support the general development process and narrow the gap between the countries of the North and those of the South.

16. Basing its policy on the need to use nuclear energy exclusively for peaceful purposes, the Syrian Arab Republic had acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards Regime. It favoured the strengthening of that safeguards regime, with a view to increasing its effectiveness, and had supported the establishment of a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Middle East. However, that particular equation would remain unbalanced in the region while Israel remained the only country to possess a large-scale nuclear arsenal and be outside the framework of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the safeguards regime.

17. Israel unwaveringly threatened the use of nuclear weapons, flouted the will of the international community and imposed its policies on other countries. That destabilized conditions in the region, which in turn gave rise to terror in view of the particularly complicated situation in the Middle East.

18. Reports were leaking out through the international mass media that there were problems in Israeli nuclear plants, among them the filtration of radioactive wastes the leakage of which could lead to the pollution of neighbouring regions and countries. That represented a real threat, and the international community had to exert pressure on Israel to ensure that it placed all its nuclear installations under IAEA safeguards.

19. Turning to cooperation with agencies of the United Nations system, he said that a nine-week Arabic-language seminar had been held during the past year in Damascus. Such cooperation would promote the strengthening of a culture of preventive measures.

20. The Syrian Arab Republic called for the complete liquidation of nuclear arsenals, which would enable the

danger of atomic radiation to be reduced to a minimum. Underestimating the consequences of atomic radiation was a risk everyone ran, and it was essential to find solutions that would enable mankind to be saved from that deadly risk. That was possible only within the framework of international cooperation based on goodwill and carried out with determination and sincerity.

21. **Mr. Chaudhry** (Pakistan) expressed gratitude to the Chairman of the Scientific Committee for his report and said that the reports of the Scientific Committee were widely respected and used to develop scientific standards.

22. His delegation welcomed the Scientific Committee's 2001 report on the hereditary effects of radiation. The Scientific Committee's conclusion that radiation exposure had no hereditary effects on human beings was quite convincing. However, in the light of developments in molecular biology and other sciences, it might be advisable to revisit the issue at a later date to explore some of the remaining uncertainties.

23. In addition, his delegation welcomed the programme of work which the Scientific Committee had adopted in April 2001 and noted in particular that Committee's intention to continue to study the health effects of the Chernobyl accident, as well as its close cooperation with scientists from Member States affected by that event.

24. Pakistan would continue to cooperate fully with the Scientific Committee in order to achieve the international community's collective goal of minimizing the effects of atomic radiation on mankind and the environment.

25. **Mr. Suanes** (Cuba) said that, for many years, the Scientific Committee had provided Member States with valuable information on the sources of atomic radiation and the effects of radiation on human beings and the environment.

26. The high scientific level of the reports of the Scientific Committee made them useful background documents for the adoption of national and international standards to protect populations against the effects of atomic radiation.

27. His delegation attached great importance to the Scientific Committee's work as a source of balanced and objective expertise in that field.

28. The Scientific Committee's report included, for the first time, a sufficiently full examination of the risks related to the hereditary effects of atomic radiation, namely diseases with both hereditary and environmental components.

29. His delegation stressed the importance of further strengthening cooperation between the Scientific Committee and other organs and agencies of the United Nations system, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), IAEA and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

30. The potential danger of atomic radiation could be eliminated only through comprehensive international cooperation on the peaceful use of atomic energy.

31. **Mr. Ouattara** (Burkina Faso) said it was gratifying that an item on activities in relation to atomic radiation had been included in the agenda. His delegation was also pleased that the Scientific Committee had submitted, at the current session, a report and a scientific annex on the hereditary effects of radiation, which undoubtedly would constitute a valuable tool for the international scientific community and for the entire world population.

32. His delegation attached great importance to the work of the Scientific Committee, which played a major role in international standard-setting for the purpose of protecting populations against the adverse effects of atomic radiation. It welcomed Ukraine's decision to close the Chernobyl nuclear plant permanently. As an advocate of the cessation of nuclear testing, it called once again for efforts to ensure that, in the new millennium, nuclear energy was used exclusively for the purposes of development and social progress. While it welcomed the Scientific Committee's close cooperation with various international, regional and subregional organizations, it called for increased cooperation between the Scientific Committee and Governments.

33. His delegation noted that the most important items in the Scientific Committee's new programme of work were the collection of new data on radiation exposures from natural, man-made and occupational sources, the extension of its evaluation of medical exposures and a comprehensive assessment of radon in homes and workplaces. His delegation reaffirmed its confidence in the Scientific Committee and stressed the importance of the latter's autonomy and independence.

34. **The Chairman** announced that Cyprus, Kazakhstan, Pakistan and San Marino had joined the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.4/56/L.5.

35. **Mr. Blazey** (Australia), **Mr. Popov** (Belarus), **Ms. Loemban Tobing-Klein** (Suriname) and **Mr. Datsenko** (Ukraine) said that their delegations also wished to become sponsors of the draft resolution.

36. **The Chairman** said that, as the draft resolution had no programme budget implications, he took it that the Committee wished to adopt it without a vote.

37. *It was so decided.*

38. **Mr. Benzioni** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply in connection with the concern expressed by the delegations of neighbouring countries, assured them that Israel, in its activities, always emphasized strict compliance with safety standards, especially with regard to nuclear reactors. The observance of the relevant safety requirements was closely monitored by both internal and external bodies, independent agencies, government entities and parliamentary committees. The other issues raised should be dealt with in the First Committee.

39. **Mr. Haggag** (Egypt) said that, while he welcomed the Israeli delegation's assurance that its nuclear facilities were secure and that they were covered by the strictest internal safeguards, he was concerned primarily about the fact that international inspection of those facilities was not allowed and that they were not covered by IAEA safeguards.

40. He agreed that the Committee must not encroach on the First Committee's area of competence. However, he urged Israel to examine closely the resolutions of the First Committee, the IAEA General Conference and the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to comply with the relevant decisions contained in those resolutions, which had been adopted by consensus.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.

United Nations A/C.4/56/SR.10

General Assembly
Fifty-sixth session

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 10th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 22 October 2001, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Hasmy ..... (Malaysia)

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Agenda item 86: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

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01-59459 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 86: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (A/56/20 and Corr.1, 306, 394)

1. **The Chairman** recalled various significant anniversaries in the history of space exploration, culminating in the largest scientific project ever attempted, with the participation of 16 nations, the International Space Station. Rather than being the potential source of conflict once feared, outer space had become a source of cooperation across political borders, making the permanent presence of humans in outer space a reality. The United Nations had played a pivotal role in promoting cooperation among nations to explore that final frontier; and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its Legal Subcommittee were continuing to do essential work in the progressive development of international space law.

2. **Mr. González** (Chairman, Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space), introducing the Committee's report (A/56/20 and Corr.1) and reviewing the work of the past year by the Committee and its subsidiary bodies, said that recent United Nations conferences had not sufficiently acknowledged the potential of space science and technology. The Committee had brought that situation to the attention of the Secretary-General and the General Assembly, in a letter circulated in document A/56/306, in the hope that other United Nations intergovernmental bodies would recognize space technology for the important tool it was. The challenge for the Committee was to establish a clear link between space benefits and the priority human development and security goals of the United Nations. It already provided a useful forum for the exchange of information on space applications and planned activities in space, but had to do more to actually bring space benefits to the people of developing countries.

3. The main areas in which the Committee had worked in the past year: were ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes; implementation of the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III); the subjects assigned to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the Legal Subcommittee; spin-off benefits of space technology; and the proposed enlargement of the Committee's membership.

4. After surveying Member States to determine the order of priority in which they would classify the various recommendations in the Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development adopted by UNISPACE III, the Committee had decided to set up 11 open-ended action teams corresponding to recommendations in priority areas that included disaster management, environmental monitoring strategy, management of Earth's resources, promotion of sustainable development, space-based navigation and positioning systems, capacity-building and increasing public awareness of the importance of space activities. Interested Member States acting as interim coordinators would lead the work associated with the recommendations concerned and each team was expected to submit a work plan for approval by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee at its next session. Non-governmental organizations as well as United Nations agencies and other intergovernmental organizations were also being encouraged to participate. That very dynamic and flexible mechanism should yield tangible results by the year 2004, when the General Assembly would review and appraise the implementation of the outcome of UNISPACE III.

5. The Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had begun consideration of a new item entitled "Implementation of an integrated, space-based global natural disaster management system". Following the three-year work plan adopted in 2000, it had reviewed the types of natural disasters and the extent to which space-based services were being utilized to mitigate them. At its next session, the Subcommittee would review satellite and data distribution systems that could be used operationally for disaster management, and identify gaps in those systems.

6. Another new agenda item dealt with strengthening inter-agency cooperation and increasing the use of space applications and services by the United Nations system. The Subcommittee had analysed the degree to which space applications were currently being used and the degree to which the space applications could increase operational effectiveness, efficiency and coordination. In 2002, in conjunction with the Inter-Agency Meeting on Outer Space Activities, the Subcommittee would study the coordination of space-related activities within the United Nations system and the barriers to more

extensive use of them, and in general seek to make their use a United Nations priority. The Subcommittee had also considered a new item entitled "Government and private activities to promote education in space science and engineering".

7. In accordance with the Subcommittee's four-year work plan, the Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space had continued to prepare the scheduled report, based on reviews of national and international processes, proposals and standards.

8. On the issue of space debris, the Subcommittee had agreed on a work plan covering the period 2002-2004: it would hear proposals by the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC) on debris mitigation, possibly endorsing them as guidelines to be voluntarily implemented by States, and would discuss impact hazards and shielding. At its 2001 session, the Subcommittee had already invited the Committee on Space Research (COSPAR) and the International Astronautical Federation (IAF) to organize a symposium on the theme "Terrestrial hazards from outer space objects and phenomena". COSPAR and IAF were being invited to arrange a 2002 symposium on the theme: "Remote sensing for water management in arid and semi-arid countries".

9. Following one of the UNISPACE III recommendations and as an effort to strengthen the partnership with industry, the Subcommittee had held its annual symposium, which in 2001 had dealt with emerging applications of global navigation satellite systems. The 2002 symposium would focus on very-high-resolution remote sensing and its impact on operational applications, as well as the space market situation. Two new items entitled "International cooperation in limiting obtrusive space advertising that could interfere with astronomical observations", and "Mobilization of financial resources to develop capacity in space science and technology applications", would be on the Subcommittee's agenda at its next session.

10. Highlights of the work of the Legal Subcommittee had included its discussion of a new agenda item entitled "Consideration of the draft convention of the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT) on international interests in mobile equipment and the preliminary draft protocol thereto on matters specific to space property", a timely issue because of the increased participation of private entities in space activities. The Subcommittee had begun consultations on the establishment of an ad hoc consultative mechanism to review the issues relating to that item, which would allow also for inter-sessional consultations with Member States; the first working meeting of the mechanism had been hosted by France.

11. On matters relating to the definition and delimitation of outer space and the character and utilization of the geostationary orbit, the Subcommittee's Working Group on the subject had met to consider only definition and delimitation issues. The Working Group had reviewed the concept of the "launching State" as set out in the Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects (the "Liability Convention") and the Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space (the "Registration Convention"); and the following year it would review measures to promote wider implementation of the two Conventions. Although the agenda recommended by the Committee for the next session of the Legal Subcommittee did not include new items, it had been agreed that a working group should be established under the item entitled "Status and application of the five United Nations treaties on outer space", which would also study the promotion of space law, especially through the United Nations Programme on Space Applications.

12. The International Institute of Space Law and the European Centre for Space Law had organized a symposium for the Legal Subcommittee on methods of peaceful settlement of space law disputes; and they would again be invited to organize a symposium on space law at its 2002 session.

13. Turning to the issue of the membership of the Committee, he said that the Committee had decided that Cuba and Peru and the Republic of Korea and Malaysia, which had shared seats on a rotating basis, should become full members of the Committee and that Saudi Arabia and Slovakia should also become members of the Committee. It had also been agreed that no further expansion of the Committee's membership would be necessary for the next seven years, unless there were special circumstances. Furthermore, the Committee had agreed that each regional group should hold consultations among its members that were also members of the Committee for the purpose of encouraging them to participate in the work of the Committee and its two Subcommittees.

The regional groups would report to the Committee on the results of those consultations. The National Space Society, the European Association for the International Space Year (EURISY) and the Space Generation Advisory Council had also been granted permanent observer status.

14. At its next session, in response to the Vienna Declaration's call for action to increase awareness among decision makers and the general public of the importance of peaceful space activities in improving the common economic and social welfare of humanity, the Committee would include in its agenda a new item entitled "Space and society". The Committee had also agreed that a report on the activities of the International Satellite System for Search and Rescue (COSPAS-SARSAT) would be considered annually in the context of the review of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, under the agenda item entitled "Report of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee".

15. The phenomena of globalization and technological revolution were combining to create a new age of networking. Unlike the industrial age, which had been structured around vertically integrated organizations with high costs of communications, information and transportation, the age of networking was structured around horizontal networks, with each organization focusing on competitive niches in order to obtain maximum political economic and financial advantage by making the right decisions at the right time. Some developing countries were tapping into those networks, with significant benefits for human development, but countries without the ability, knowledge and resources to take appropriate and timely action were much less likely to survive in a rapidly changing world and were becoming increasingly vulnerable to sudden changes in the pattern of trade, finance and investment. Scientific and technical cooperation, in particular with regard to space, was therefore all the more essential. In the networking age, all nations must have the ability to adopt global technologies to local needs, in order to survive. Policy, not charity, would determine whether new technologies became a tool for human development, particularly for developing countries. New international initiatives based on international law and the fair use of global rules were needed to channel new technologies towards the most urgent needs of the world's poor people.

16. Space technology and its new applications would require new avenues for international cooperation in the changing international framework. International cooperation in space activities at all levels had expanded rapidly over the past decade and many countries were carrying out their space programmes in cooperation with other countries. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space would continue to strengthen and expand that cooperation to promote the practical use of space applications for social and economic development and thereby contribute to meeting the basic needs of individuals in developing countries.

17. **Ms. Cervi** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey and, in addition, Norway, welcomed the innovative and pragmatic manner in which the recommendations of UNISPACE III were being implemented but recalled that notwithstanding the large number of new projects and initiatives worldwide, more must be done so that the developing countries could take part in and benefit from technologies and advances linked to the exploration and peaceful use of space.

18. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had made progress in dealing with concerns relating to space debris: the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had prepared an ambitious plan of work which would lead to recommendations to the General Assembly in 2004. In 2002, the European Centre for Space Law would submit to the Legal Subcommittee the results of a study it intended to undertake on legal aspects relating to that issue. The European Union considered that the issue of space debris and the role of international law in that area should be added to the agenda of the Legal Subcommittee without delay.

19. The European Union's space policy was one of innovation, concentrating on applications of benefit to society, as exemplified by the European Space Agency's GALILEO programme, an autonomous civilian satellite navigation system which offered various services, including consumer applications. The Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) programme, launched in cooperation with the European Space Agency, was another important programme which should contribute to a better understanding of climate change and the destruction of

natural resources and to preventing and managing natural and industrial disasters. It provided backup for other European policies in areas such as agriculture and the environment and a consensus would be sought in order to launch that project at the European level.

20. Recalling that international law set strict limits on the use of outer space for military purposes, she said that the issue of ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes should be studied in depth by all the bodies concerned within the context of their respective mandates. The Conference on Disarmament must be fully active in that matter.

21. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space must continue its efforts to strengthen the international basis for the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space, including the development of international space law and, where appropriate, international agreements on the various practical and peaceful applications of space science and technology; it should also continue to promote ratification of the United Nations treaties on outer space. The growing number of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and private companies which were seeking to participate in the Committee's work confirmed that the Committee's efforts to give renewed impetus to its activities had been successful.

22. Space must be used in peace and for peace; the European Union would continue its efforts within the framework of international space cooperation and the competent bodies of the United Nations to implement the principles of international space law as well as the recommendations made in that area such as those formulated by UNISPACE III.

23. **Mr. González** (Chile), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Common Market of the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR) and the associated States Bolivia and Chile, said that outer space must be viewed as the common heritage of all peoples, and that it must be used rationally and peacefully for the collective benefit of both current and future generations. In that connection, he stressed the principle of inter-generational and intra-generational equity reflected in the norms of international space law, particularly the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies. Space technology could be helpful in, inter alia, locating essential resources for economic and social development, predicting patterns of global climate change and monitoring disarmament treaties and the control of drug-trafficking, provided that truly accurate information was available and access to knowledge and education was more equitable. Despite progress in the development of space technology, however, a large percentage of the world's population did not enjoy its benefits and lacked a clear understanding of its potential.

24. Appropriate technologies to mitigate natural disasters must be developed. In that connection, MERCOSUR firmly supported the work of the expert group on an integrated, space-based global natural disaster management system and hoped that substantive progress would be achieved. The coordination of distance learning programmes by satellite would improve the educational level in isolated and rural areas and bring the world closer to the goal of achieving universal access to the "information society". Information obtained by satellite technology was also vital to protecting the environment and promoting sustainable development for all.

25. He emphasized the importance of General Assembly resolution 55/122 on international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space. International cooperation was the key to the development of space technology and would prevent the self-exclusion of a large number of States which were not sharing in the benefits of space-related technologies. Human security must extend to the inhabitants of the entire planet and also to future generations and the environment.

26. MERCOSUR attached great importance to the continuation of studies for the early implementation of the measures recommended by UNISPACE III, including the resolution entitled "The Space Millennium: Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development". A working group of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space must be established at an early date in order to deal with that question, with the main objective of ensuring that the developing countries were able to take full advantage of the benefits of outer space. To that end, MERCOSUR and its associated States urged all States to cooperate fully with the Trust Fund for the United Nations Programme on Space Applications.

27. MERCOSUR looked forward to the Fourth Space Conference of the Americas, to be held in 2003 in

Colombia, and the preparatory meeting for the Conference, to be held in Chile in 2002, in accordance with paragraph 26 of General Assembly resolution 55/122. It welcomed the enlargement of the membership of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, which was consistent with the principle of geographic distribution and would enhance the work of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies, particularly the Legal Subcommittee. Since national Governments were the main actors in the regulation of international space activities, the Committee must remain a forum for the exchange of information among States, for the improvement of exchanges among space programme administrators and of the international legal framework for space activities, and for the establishment and/or strengthening of cooperation. The ultimate goal must be to integrate all States in space activities and ensure wide access to their benefits. For that reason, MERCOSUR strongly supported the revitalization of the activities of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies. He stressed the need to educate national policy makers on the application of space technology to sustainable economic development.

28. **Mr. Ri** Kyong Il (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that, three years after the adoption of the Vienna Declaration, no substantial achievements had been made; a few countries were trying to monopolize the exploration and uses of outer space while the developing countries were becoming further marginalized. In particular, the militarization of outer space was continuing.

29. The rights and activities of developing countries to explore outer space must be respected and their activities must not be curtailed or branded as "missile tests" by the more technologically advanced countries. On the fictitious pretext that his country posed a "missile threat", the United States of America was establishing a missile defence system which could well trigger an arms race in outer space. The Legal Subcommittee of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space should give serious attention to considering measures to control the militarization of outer space. He stressed that the missile programme of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was peaceful in nature. The country had launched its first artificial satellite in August 1998 and would continue its exploration of outer space not only for its own economic development but also to improve technical cooperation and exchanges with other countries of the world.

30. **Mr. Shebani** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya attached great importance to the use of space-related technology for economic development, natural disaster mitigation and prevention through early warning, the prediction of climate change and the improvement of health services. Space technology was also vital in combating desertification. His delegation would welcome the implementation of an integrated space-based global natural disaster management system and an increase in cooperation between national and international space agencies. There was a pressing need to implement the measures outlined in General Assembly resolution 55/122.

31. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya followed with interest the activities of the subcommittees of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. At UNISPACE III, it had presented a paper reflecting its interest in outer space, and it had established a Libyan Remote Sensing Centre, which participated in scientific and technical activities organized by regional and international institutions and cooperated with specialized institutions in other States.

32. His delegation hoped that developing countries would be given sufficient means to establish national space committees and institutes with the same capabilities as those of developed countries. He stressed the need to use outer space for peaceful purposes only and to halt the arms race therein, and for coordination between the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the Disarmament Commission. His delegation believed that outer space was the common heritage of all humankind and should therefore be used for humanitarian purposes only and not to create tension and instability at the international level.

33. **Mr. Su** Wei (China) welcomed the progress made by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and stressed the importance of its role in ensuring international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space. His delegation warned against the danger of increased militarization of outer space and, recalling General Assembly resolution 55/122 and the Vienna Declaration, urged the Committee to continue to promote on a priority basis concrete actions and

recommendations, including international legal instruments, to facilitate international cooperation.

34. His delegation welcomed the Committee's decision to implement the recommendations of UNISPACE III in stages and, to that end, to establish action teams which would report to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee in 2002 on progress made; that approach would encourage greater participation on the part of Member States and allow for productive activity within existing resources.

35. His delegation welcomed the efforts of the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT) with regard to a draft convention on international interests in mobile equipment and the preliminary draft protocol thereto on matters specific to space property; given the growth in commercial use of outer space and the increasing role played by the private sector, further work was necessary to develop legal instruments and regulations to deal with matters such as financing, mortgages and guarantees. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its Legal Subcommittee should play an important role in developing the legal framework for the exploration of outer space. The definition of an international regime governing the financing of guarantees relating to space property compatible with the draft convention on international interests in mobile equipment, as well as other treaties relating to outer space, would require close consultations and his delegation would continue to work with other delegations to resolve any problems and ensure a positive outcome.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.

United Nations A/C.4/56/SR.11

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 11th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 23 October 2001, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Hasmy ..... (Malaysia)

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Agenda item 86: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*)

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01-59705 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 86: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*) (A/56/20 and Corr.1, 306 and 394)

1. **Mr. Droba** (Slovakia) said that his country's 30-year tradition of outer space research, space science and space exploration had been crowned in 1999 by a short-term space flight by the first Slovak astronaut as part of a Russian/French/Slovak project.

2. His delegation welcomed the proposal to enlarge the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, and was proud that its own active involvement in the field had been recognized by the Committee's endorsement of Slovakia as a full-fledged new member, along with the other countries which until then had shared a seat on a rotating basis. Slovakia's decision to join the Committee had provided strong motivation to the Slovak scientific community. The Commission for Research and the Peaceful Use of Outer Space, established in 2000 as an advisory body to the Council for Science and Technology, was doing useful work; Slovakia actively participated in the recently established Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education and also supported the efforts to implement the recommendations of the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III). Several schools in Slovakia had participated in international educational programmes; and Slovak researchers were currently taking part in projects on the peaceful uses of outer space in relation to the environment, telecommunications, space physics, geophysics, astronomy, the life sciences, meteorology and remote sensing.

3. **Mr. Hodgkins** (United States of America) said that the first 13 flights in the International Space Station assembly had been completed, and that, in just over one year, the International Space Station had developed from a modest facility to a complex and advanced spacecraft in which the crew lived, worked and conducted research. A new United States airlock and a Russian docking compartment had made it possible to spacewalk directly from the International Space Station without the space shuttle, thereby facilitating construction and expanding research possibilities. By early December, three more spacecraft would visit the International Space Station.

4. April 2001 had marked the twentieth anniversary of the flight of Columbia, the first United States space shuttle. Since that time, the shuttle had launched nearly 1.4 million kilograms of cargo and more than 600 passengers and pilots. Over 850 payloads had flown, including hundreds of individual experiments. The shuttle had mapped 90 per cent of the earth's surface with unprecedented precision, and astronauts on board had discovered and confirmed ancient impact craters on earth, tracked deforestation, monitored coral reefs, studied air and water pollution and documented the effects of drought, floods, volcanoes and hurricanes. Hundreds of investigations had been conducted on the effects of weightlessness on plants, animals and materials aboard the shuttle. As a result of improvements in the shuttle's safety and capabilities over the years, its cargo capacity had increased by 12 tons. Its annual operating costs had decreased by 40 per cent; engine improvements and other upgrades had reduced estimated risks during launching by 80 per cent and the number of problems experienced in flights had dropped by 70 per cent. The space shuttle fleet was expected to fly for at least another decade and probably much longer.

5. His delegation welcomed the progress achieved in revitalizing the agendas and methods of work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and its subcommittees, particularly the Legal Subcommittee, which, since 1992, had adopted five major outer space treaties and various sets of international principles by a process of consensus and multilateral diplomacy. In particular, 2001 marked the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of the Principles Relating to Remote Sensing of the Earth from Outer Space and the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on International Cooperation in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space for the Benefit and in the Interest of All States, Taking into Particular Account the Needs of Developing Countries which established the freedom of States to determine all aspects of their international cooperation, whether bilateral or multilateral, commercial or non-commercial, and to choose the most effective mode of cooperation in order to allocate resources efficiently.

6. His delegation looked forward to the Legal Subcommittee's consideration in 2002 of the concept of the "launching State", contained in the Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects and the Registration Convention. On the basis of reports produced by the Office for Outer Space

Affairs and the secretariat of the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT), the Legal Subcommittee had also achieved progress in its consideration of a draft convention and protocols for the registration of security interests in high-value mobile equipment, including aircraft, rail and space property. In that connection, his delegation supported the recommendation to retain the item on the agenda and the establishment of a consultative mechanism to review the issues relating to the item.

7. His delegation expressed satisfaction at the progress achieved by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee and the useful documentation issued by the Office for Outer Space Affairs, particularly the compilation of information on the use of space technology within the United Nations system and its proposals on specific ways of promoting greater cooperation in space exploration on the basis of the results of UNISPACE III.

8. He welcomed the substantial progress made with regard to the plan of action for implementing the recommendations of UNISPACE III. In that connection, the United States had provided $500,000 to the Office for Outer Space Affairs to support up to five regional workshops on the use of global navigation satellite systems for environmental applications and sustainable development. The first workshop had been held in Malaysia in August; and subsequent workshops were scheduled in 2001 and 2002 in Austria, Chile and Africa.

9. His delegation welcomed the consensus in the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on enlarging its membership. The chairs of regional groups should be notified of the Committee's recommendation that they should hold consultations among those members which were also members of the Committee and submit a report to the Committee on those consultations.

10. Lastly, speaking in exercise of the right of reply, he said that his delegation categorically rejected the assertions made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea concerning its space activities. The United States was involved in unprecedented international space cooperation, and there was no arms race in outer space. The United States space programme had been and would continue to be guided by the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the outer space treaties. To argue otherwise, as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had sought to do, was baseless and a distortion of the truth.

11. **Mr. Takahashi** (Japan), said that space technologies in the field of Earth observation had the potential to help solve global problems related to resources, food and the environment, and the everyday utilization of space technology had already become indispensable in the areas of telecommunications, broadcasting and meteorological observations. Japan's successful launching of the H-II A rocket in August 2001 had given great impetus to space activities in Japan, and would provide the technological foundation for launching satellites and developing industrial applications for public benefit. The participation of a Japanese astronaut in a United States space shuttle flight to assemble the International Space Station was one example of his Government's international cooperation. Upon completion of that mission, briefings by the astronaut and his colleagues throughout Japan had sparked a great deal of interest in space activities among young people.

12. His Government was very much in favour of the mechanism set up by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space for the implementation of the recommendations of the Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development adopted at UNISPACE III. Japan itself was especially interested in working on the issue of the future development of space activities through the development of human resources. It welcomed the fact that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had at its 2001 session adopted a work plan on the issue of space debris, and hoped that it would consider standards for reducing debris in outer space, the technical aspects of which had long been studied by Japan's space agencies.

13. **Mr. Tiwathia** (India) noted with satisfaction that the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had assigned priorities to the recommendations of UNISPACE III as a first step towards implementing them; his delegation looked forward to active participation as a member of the action teams and as interim coordinator for the recommendation to improve the management of the Earth's natural resources. India also supported the proposed enlargement of the membership of the Committee. His delegation was also pleased with the productive work done in the past year by the two Subcommittees.

14. Turning to the activities of the Indian space programme in 2001, he said that a geosynchronous satellite launch vehicle had been successfully launched in April 2001, placing an experimental satellite into geosynchronous transfer orbit; that flight was an important step in achieving the capability for launching geostationary satellites. The various components of the Indian National Satellite (INSAT) system made it one of the largest domestic communication satellite systems in the world. New areas such as interactive education through satellites and telemedicine applications were also being given priority, in addition to the operational programmes. The system supported domestic applications in areas such as crop forecasting, ground and surface water harvesting, forest surveying, wasteland and potential fishing-zone mapping, urban planning and environmental monitoring; and the data from those satellites was being shared with several countries under commercial agreements. A new initiative had been taken to develop the infrastructure to make national spatial data available for various development planning activities.

15. India was contributing significantly to space education as part of its international cooperation. The Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific had organized courses for almost 300 scholars from 39 countries. The Indian Space Research Organization and the French national space agency had agreed to conduct a joint satellite mission to study the atmospheric water cycle and the effect of tropical convective systems on the global climate. Indian satellite data was being provided regularly to the European Space Agency (ESA) and the United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). In addition, the numerous public outreach programmes held during World Space Week in October 2000 had focused on the contribution of space technology to improving the quality of life.

16. The United Nations should continue to lead the efforts to enhance international cooperation in preserving outer space as the common heritage of mankind.

17. **Mr. Ramli** (Malaysia) said that the militarization of outer space must be avoided at all costs and that the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had to do its utmost to prevent any development that could trigger a new arms race in outer space. There was an urgent need to strengthen the existing legal system, which was clearly inadequate in the face of the rapid developments in outer space. Additional agreements had to be concluded to prohibit the testing, deployment and use of any weapons, components or objects intended for space warfare. His delegation therefore welcomed the Committee's continued consideration of the item entitled "Ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes".

18. Malaysia was committed to the development of space science and its technological applications, focusing on remote sensing, satellite technology, telecommunications, meteorology and education. There were currently six meteorological satellite ground stations in Malaysia, and the data they produced supported both weather forecasting and non-meteorological applications such as detection of forest fires or other dangerous conditions and agricultural surveying. His Government had also taken steps to develop its human resources in the scientific fields. Space science courses were being offered in several local universities and space science had been made a compulsory subject in secondary schools in order to generate interest at an early age. Malaysia had, furthermore, hosted a number of international training courses and workshops on remote sensing and satellite technology, as well as the first United Nations/United States of America Workshop on the Use of Global Navigation Satellite Systems, held in 2001.

19. His delegation strongly believed that the admission of new members to the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space would strengthen it, and hoped that the Committee's recommendations to that effect would be endorsed by the General Assembly.

20. **Mr. Haggag** (Egypt) commended the role of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in strengthening international cooperation in the exploration of outer space and promoting its use for peaceful purposes by all States and peoples without restrictions or discrimination. Such cooperation had been evident in the many international and regional conferences and workshops that had been organized during the period covered by the report (A/56/20). The Committee's role in establishing a legal framework governing the use of outer space through the adoption of five international treaties on the subject was a matter for pride. His delegation wished particularly to commend the Committee's work on the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III. It welcomed the list of priorities that had been established and looked forward to the deliberations of the action

teams. The action teams should continue their work until the General Assembly carried out its review and appraisal of the progress made in implementing the recommendations at its fifty-ninth session.

21. His delegation wished to reaffirm the importance it attached to the wider use of space technology and its applications, and of remote sensing, in various fields of development for the benefit of the developing countries. In that context he called on all Member States to contribute to the Trust Fund for the United Nations Programme on Space Applications in support of activities for the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III, particularly priority projects and proposals for the benefit of the developing countries including those relating to disaster management, management of natural resources and satellite communications for tele-education and telemedicine applications. At the same time, his delegation looked forward to further efforts to strengthen the capabilities of the developing countries in the fields of research and capacity-building to enable them to benefit from space applications in various fields, particularly agriculture, industry, health, medicine and remote sensing.

22. His delegation wished to stress the importance of compliance by all States that used nuclear power sources in outer space with the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space contained in General Assembly resolution 47/68. If those principles were to be amended, that should be done through scientific and technological agreement involving all States on a basis of equality.

23. Some years earlier, his country had established the national space, science and technology research council and the Ministry of State for scientific research. The purpose of the council was to develop a comprehensive national programme to take advantage of the peaceful applications of the use of outer space and to attain the technological and development objectives of the State, including the adoption of satellite technology for the study of desert regions, while training scientific personnel, developing an Egyptian space programme and using space technology and its applications in the development of local industry. In recent years, his country had achieved some success through the promotion of space applications and was determined to continue its various programmes in that area in cooperation with the United Nations and with Member States.

24. **Mr. Gappoev** (Russian Federation) said that an arms race in outer space or any form of armed confrontation in outer space was unacceptable and contrary to the Vienna Declaration. The Russian Federation strongly opposed the deployment of weapons of any kind and the use of force or threat of force in outer space or from outer space towards Earth and had consistently viewed the 1972 Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems as a cornerstone for maintaining global strategic stability and preventing the extension of the arms race into outer space.

25. From 11 to 14 April 2001, Moscow had been the venue for an international conference entitled "Space without weapons: an arena for peaceful cooperation in the twenty-first century", attended by representatives of more than 100 States and of the United Nations system, which had demonstrated the existence of serious concern about the possibility of an arms race in outer space. Unfortunately, discussions in the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space on ways and means of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes had lately been flagging, and Committee members had not been giving the issue sufficient attention. His delegation called on Committee members to make optimal use of the Committee's unique potential for fruitful discussion of the matter.

26. The current year marked the fortieth anniversary of the first flight by a man in space, Yuri Gagarin. Gagarin's flight had served as a spur not only to technological progress but also to the elaboration of norms in a new area of international law, space law. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had always been at the forefront of that process. The fortieth session of the Legal Subcommittee had been characterized by a useful and constructive discussion on the Russian Federation's proposal regarding the desirability of developing a single comprehensive convention on space law.

27. There was an urgent need to adapt the existing norms of international space law to contemporary needs and realities. Within the framework of a comprehensive convention, complex issues such as the delimitation and definition of outer space, the monitoring of pollution by man-made debris, the regulation of scientific research and commercial activities in outer space, the protection of intellectual property rights and the settlement of disputes could be

resolved in a mutually acceptable manner. The convention would not only codify existing norms, but also make a significant contribution to the progressive development of international law.

28. The package approach proposed by his delegation would be the most acceptable way of harmonizing the interests of participant States without detriment to their sovereign rights, as well as priorities in the field of outer space exploration. By examining each particular aspect of space exploration and the use of space equipment and technology in the context of a single whole, it should be possible to arrive at a carefully balanced text which would form the basis for a universal convention. While the development of a reliable, universally recognized and stable legal basis for the ever-increasing uses of outer space would require significant efforts on the part of the international community, its benefits would be incalculable.

29. **Mr. Pohan** (Indonesia) said that through the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space in its unique role as a focal point of international cooperation, the application of space science and technology had become a powerful tool for aiding developing countries in their national development programmes and for making the most of their indigenous capabilities. Satellite communication had impacted every facet of human life, from education and agriculture to navigation and disaster management, but progress in technology had not solved the problems of poverty, lack of resources and lower standards of living.

30. Indonesia hoped that all States would contribute to the Trust Fund for the United Nations Programme on Space Applications with a view to the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III. The strengthening of regional and international cooperation would help make the benefits of space technology available to all States. Indonesia had participated in numerous meetings of regional organizations and initiatives and welcomed the establishment of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Specialized Meteorological Centre.

31. Implementing an integrated plan for sustainable development had become an imperative for mankind. Non-discriminatory access to state-of-the-art remote sensing data at an affordable cost must be extended to all countries to ensure an acceptable quality of life for their populations. There was also a need to establish a legal regime for the geostationary orbit to ensure that all countries could have equitable access to that limited resource.

32. His delegation noted that the Legal Subcommittee would continue to consider the item entitled "Status and application of the five United Nations treaties on outer space". Concurrently, information submitted by international organizations would contribute to the development of space law. Indonesia further supported the enlargement of the membership of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space which would strengthen international cooperation and help to maximize the benefits of outer space for all peoples.

33. **Mr. Requeijo** (Cuba) said that three of the principles embodied in the Declaration of Legal Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space were of particular importance to his delegation. First was the need to preserve outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes while promoting international cooperation, economic growth and sustainable development. The transfer of space technology from developed to developing countries was essential and could, inter alia, help in anticipating natural disasters. In that context, Cuba opposed any attempt to amend the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space that did not take account of the interests of all countries, particularly the developing countries. Secondly, Cuba rejected plans which would lead to an arms race in outer space, which would violate the principle that outer space was the common heritage of mankind and jeopardize collective security, and was concerned that certain nuclear Powers were blocking negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on an international instrument to prevent an arms race in outer space. Thirdly, new mechanisms were needed for an adequate monitoring of the implementation of space law.

34. His delegation was in favour of strengthening the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, having regard for the legitimate interest of developing countries in increasing their membership. It welcomed the Committee's decision to enlarge its membership.

35. His delegation was also pleased to note that the Committee was continuing its consideration of matters concerning space debris; more attention was needed to the problem of collisions of space objects, including

those with nuclear power sources on board, with space debris.

36. The strengthening of regional cooperation in space research and cooperation within the United Nations was of great importance, in both scientific and legal terms, and would lead to a better use of space technologies for the benefit of mankind.

37. **Mr. Datsenko** (Ukraine) said that his Government attached great significance to the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and supported its enlargement. International space cooperation was an objective necessity and a substantial factor in the development of space science; a successful example was the International Space Station, which could be used to expand the capabilities of States for using space technologies and for medical and biological research.

38. The importance of international cooperation was reflected in international space law. Consideration needed to be given to issues such as space debris, the status of low near-Earth orbits as a limited natural resource, the use of nuclear energy sources in outer space, intellectual property protection in respect of space vehicles, use of space technology and legal aspects of global navigation systems. The development of effective mechanisms for settling disputes in connection with space commercialization should also be considered, taking into account existing arbitration rules. Another problem was that many States had not yet become parties to the United Nations outer space treaties; they were urged to do so and to ensure compliance of national legislation with their provisions.

39. A multilateral political consensus in respect of outer space activities was needed to expand political support for international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space; the issue should be placed on the agendas of multilateral meetings of heads of State, while a similar approach should be used to expand political support among legislators. If international cooperation failed to expand, it would be difficult for many developing countries to create a reliable scientific and educational base for the sustainable development of space technology. It was especially important to secure reliable and economically viable access to outer space on a non-discriminatory basis.

40. The role of the United Nations in expanding international cooperation could be facilitated by the following measures: extending the work programme of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, in particular by strengthening partnership relations with industry; expanding the activity of the Legal Subcommittee, taking into account the relevant recommendations of the Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development; and improving the coordination of outer space activities in the United Nations system.

41. Ukraine wished to offer its capabilities in rendering space services, exchanging the ideas of its scientists and using its ground infrastructure for joint projects. In view of the needs of developing countries, practical measures should be intensified to develop the training of specialists, which could be done within the framework of bilateral and multilateral programmes to strengthen regional centres for space science and technology. His delegation appealed to the international community to support Ukraine's initiative for a new regional training centre.

42. **Ms. Arce** (Peru) welcomed the consideration by the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the implementation of an integrated, space-based natural disaster management system, which would help to quantify the causes of disasters and prevent human and material losses through an efficient early warning capacity. It would constitute a direct benefit of space technology for many countries, like Peru, which were affected by natural disasters. A group of countries, including Peru, had asked the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to include a new item on space and society in its agenda, since civil society needed to know what possibilities existed for applying space technology to promoting peace and development, in implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III.

43. Peru firmly supported the need to ensure the peaceful use of outer space as a matter of principle and was about to ratify the Convention on the International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects and the Outer Space Treaty in order to contribute to universal accession to the five United Nations treaties on outer space.

44. Peru welcomed the decision by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to expand its membership, ending the rotation of members which had had the effect of truncating the contributions of States like Peru on topics of vital importance to them.

45. **Mr. Fallouh** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his country welcomed the international trend towards using outer space for peaceful purposes and securing the greatest possible economic and humanitarian benefits, especially for developing countries. It also welcomed the efforts of some countries to reduce spending on military space programmes and use the enormous advances in the field of outer space for development, for preserving the environment and for solving economic, environmental and health problems. At the same time, his country viewed with apprehension the continued existence of programmes aimed at the militarization of outer space and its use for purposes that hindered global development and peace and frustrated the hopes and aspirations of humanity towards stability, development and security.

46. The participation by a Syrian astronaut in a space flight a number of years earlier had been an expression of his country's desire to play a constructive part in the international space effort. Moreover, the Syrian Arab Republic had established a remote sensing agency to permit the use of scientific advances for development purposes and for the preservation of the environment.

47. His delegation believed that the firm establishment of the peaceful uses of outer space required a genuine commitment on the part of the international community secured by clear, constantly evolving legal principles and frameworks to guarantee against the militarization and misuse of outer space and the development of an arms race in outer space. It would be useful, for that purpose, if the Conference on Disarmament and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space coordinated their efforts. In that context, countries with major space capacities would bear the greatest responsibility. Moreover, the question of space debris would have to be dealt with more seriously, especially with a view to preventing collisions of space objects, in particular those with nuclear power sources on board. States possessing nuclear-powered satellites had a major responsibility to provide adequate information on their spacecraft and the related components and fuels and on the measures taken by them to ensure the safety of their uses of space.

48. His delegation wished once again to express its satisfaction with the outcome of UNISPACE III, and the adoption of the Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development and of the resolutions and recommendations on ways and means of providing developing countries with the right of fair use of space technology and its achievements.

49. **Mr. Ouattara** (Burkina Faso) welcomed the expansion of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and expressed satisfaction at the Committee's continued efforts to promote the peaceful applications of space technologies which were of vital importance to developing countries, including Burkina Faso. His delegation expressed support for the establishment of action teams to consider the recommendations made in the Vienna Declaration; it welcomed the decision by Nigeria to act as coordinator for recommendation 11, and assured that delegation of its full cooperation.

50. Regrettably, in Burkina Faso insufficient financial resources had paralysed the committee responsible for space-related matters and prevented the development of a national space programme and had also led to the recent closure of the regional remote sensing site, depriving the country of an important tool for managing and developing its environment. He therefore stressed the need to address the problem of the exorbitant costs of satellite data and to increase inter-State and inter-agency cooperation and called for more training programmes to be carried out at regional centres and for more long-term study grants to be made available to the developing countries.

51. Despite the remarkable progress in space technology, most countries had not benefited greatly from that technology. Increasing militarization of outer space and the unresolved problem of space debris further marginalized the developing countries and contributed to growing insecurity and indeed posed a serious threat to peace and world security. It was therefore essential that matters relating to the definition and delimitation of outer space and to the character and utilization of the geostationary orbit should be addressed on an urgent basis. All relevant bodies, including the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, the Office for Outer Space Affairs and the Conference on Disarmament must work to that end. Advances in science and technology were helping the developing countries solve the problems of poverty and underdevelopment; in the current context of globalization, greater solidarity was needed.

52. **Mr. Buroffice** (Nigeria) welcomed the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (A/56/20) and the recommendations contained therein.

He noted that the developing countries, although they did not have the luxury of their own space exploration programmes, focused on the exploitation of space technologies for the benefit of their people and as a tool for development. Nigeria, for example, had developed a national space policy in 2001 and its national space research and development agency had established a committee on national geographic information systems to deal with issues such as natural resource management, infrastructure development, disaster prevention and mitigation, and environmental monitoring and protection. Its national space policy stressed the strengthening of indigenous capability for space-related research as a tool to promote sustainable development, improve communications systems and acquire modern technology. Implementation of that policy would require the cooperation of the international community and to that end his Government had entered into discussions with several countries in an effort to promote bilateral cooperation and implement space-related programmes. His Government continued to provide financial support for the African Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education, located in Nigeria, which had just offered its first course, on remote sensing and geographic information systems, and was preparing a second course on satellite meteorology.

53. The relevant international instruments dealing with space law were an important aspect of international cooperation; his Government had signed and ratified two of the treaties on outer space and the remaining three treaties were being studied by the Ministry of Justice with a view to ratification. His Government was organizing a symposium on space law, in which representatives of the Ministry of Justice, academia and legislators would take part, which would discuss space technology and the legal framework for outer space activities and their implications for Nigeria and make recommendations with regard to ratification of the three remaining space treaties. In that context, he urged other States to consider ratifying the international instruments relating to outer space.

54. His delegation welcomed the recommendations made in the Vienna Declaration and supported the establishment of action teams; his delegation had agreed to act as coordinator for the action team on recommendation 11 on behalf of the African Member States. He stressed, however, that in order for the developing countries to truly benefit from space-related technologies, their indigenous capabilities must be reinforced. The developed world had an obligation to help them exploit space-related technology for the purpose of sustainable development, rational exploitation of their natural resources, disaster monitoring and preservation of the environment. In that context, he welcomed the decision by the General Assembly to create a Trust Fund for the United Nations Programme on Space Applications, including implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE III, which would benefit the developing countries. He was, however, concerned that lack of financial resources for the Office for Outer Space Affairs might have a negative effect on efforts to assist the developing countries in that regard and urged the General Assembly to provide adequate resources to the Office so that it could fulfil its mandate.

55. **Mr. Ri** Kyong Il (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) speaking in exercise of the right of reply, reiterated that efforts by the United States of America to develop a missile defence system would certainly contribute to an increased arms race and to the further militarization of outer space. Such activities could clearly not be characterized as peaceful. He stressed that the task of the Committee was not only to promote the peaceful uses of outer space but also to work to prevent the militarization of outer space. For example, the work of the Legal Subcommittee to regulate space activities was not an effort to hinder countries' attempts to explore outer space but aimed to safeguard the safety and security of the world and ensure the peaceful use of outer space and in so doing prevent any country from attempting to militarize outer space.

56. **Mr. Hodgkins** (United States of America), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he regretted the inaccurate and self-serving comments made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which presented a distorted world view. He noted that the United States' space programme was carried out in a spirit of transparency and cooperation and had provided great benefits to the international community. He also reiterated that the programme fully respected the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and relevant space treaties and that to suggest otherwise was quite untrue.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.

United Nations A/C.4/56/SR.12

General Assembly
Fifty-sixth session

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 12th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 25 October 2001, at 4 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Hasmy ..... (Malaysia)

Contents

Agenda item 86: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*)

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01-60256 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 4.10 p.m.

Agenda item 86: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*) (A/56/20 and Corr.1, A/56/306, A/56/394, A/C.4/56/L.6)

Draft resolution A/C.4/56/L.6

1. **Mr. González** (Chile), introducing draft resolution A/C.4/56/L.6 on behalf of the Working Group of the Whole on International Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, said that since the text had been agreed upon by consensus, he hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted without a vote.

2. **The Chairman** said that he had been informed by the Secretariat that it did not anticipate any programme budget implications arising from draft resolution A/C.4/56/L.6.

3. *Draft resolution A/C.4/56/L.6 was adopted.*

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.

United Nations A/C.4/56/SR.13

General Assembly
Fifty-sixth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
7 January 2001
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Original: Russian

Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 13th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 29 October 2001, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Hasmy ..... (Malaysia)

Contents

Agenda item 87: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

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01-60701 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 87: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
(A/55/1021-S/2001/735; A/56/13 and Add.1, A/56/290, A/56/375, A/56/382, A/56/420, A/56/421 and A/56/430)

1. **Mr. Hansen** (Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)), introducing his report for the period from 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001 (A/56/13 and Add.1), said that the tragic events of 11 September in the United States had shocked people all over the Middle East and that the staff of UNRWA were at one with the Secretary-General of the United Nations in condemning terrorist acts and supporting the United Nations in its efforts to counter them.

2. The past year had been a time of great tension in the occupied Palestinian territory, which had seriously affected the Palestinian economy. The majority of Palestinian households and refugee families were living below the poverty line. Although the political developments in the region were beyond UNRWA's mandate, the Agency could not escape their impact, since they affected its day-to-day operations. For decades, UNRWA had been considered a force for stability in the refugee community, and therefore also in the region. However, the events of 11 September, the conflict against terrorism in Afghanistan and the general sense of crisis and uncertainty had also impacted on the situation of refugees. It was very important for the refugees to feel assured that the international community would continue to be committed to their welfare and UNRWA had a central role in that task.

3. It was therefore imperative that UNRWA plan its activities beyond the short term, and to do that it needed sound financial foundations for its plans. Because of the structural budget deficit that had persisted in the past few years, the quality and extent of UNRWA's activities were under serious threat. The Agency's expenditure per refugee had declined from $200 in 1973 to less than $68 in 1999. Yet the demand for its services was growing at a rapid pace: in Gaza alone, the Agency had to provide more than 11,000 new school places every year. Some 93 per cent of Agency schools in Jordan ran on double shifts, and it was a struggle to avoid the introduction of triple shifts. In health centres each doctor had to see more than 100 patients a day.

4. At a meeting in Amman in September 2001, the major donor countries had been informed that, if the cash shortfall was not made up urgently, the Agency would not be able to meet its obligations, including the payment of wages for the month. In order to place UNRWA's finances on a stable footing, meetings had been organized with the Foreign Ministers of the European Union countries and with senior officials in the United States Department of State. Notably, the European Commission had decided to increase its contribution by 45 per cent in the coming year. It was to be hoped that that decision would serve as an example to all the other donors.

5. The continuing debt owed by the Palestinian Authority on account of the non-reimbursement of value added tax (VAT) payments had serious financial implications for the Agency. The debt amounted to about $25 million including accumulated interest. UNRWA supported the Palestinian Authority's proposal that Israel should transfer directly to the Agency $15 million of the VAT and customs duties it had collected, and $6 million of port charges levied. The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs had rejected the proposed method of resolving the situation; it was to be hoped that the rejection was temporary. A quick settlement of those issues would contribute greatly towards the reduction of the Agency's budget deficit in the current year. It was gratifying that the Agency's budget proposals had been positively received in the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ).

6. Not only the shortage of resources but also the various restrictions on the movement of people and goods were a serious obstacle to the Agency's humanitarian work. That issue was continuously being brought to the attention of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs at all possible levels, but no progress had yet been made. The Israeli authorities searched Agency vehicles driven by staff holding diplomatic visas and red laissez-passers. Those procedures were inconsistent with the provisions of the 1946 Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, which stipulated that United Nations property was exempt from search.

7. Despite all the difficulties mentioned, the Agency had made significant progress. Education levels among

the refugees were the highest in the region. UNRWA's Rehabilitation Centre for the Visually Impaired in Gaza City and its job placement scheme had received a prestigious award. The Agency was implementing a management reform programme, which was already producing results in various areas.

8. In conclusion, he thanked all the donors who had supported UNRWA with their contributions and called on them to maintain their support in the future and, if possible, to increase the size of their contributions.

9. **Mr. Brattskar** (Norway), Rapporteur of the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, introducing the Working Group's report (A/56/430), said that, during the past year, the Working Group had followed with concern the difficulties experienced by the Agency and, in particular, its serious financial situation. In 2000, UNRWA's cash deficit had amounted to $24.4 million. In previous years deficits in the cash budget had been covered out of working capital. However, that reserve had been fully depleted in 1999. Since income for 2000 had fallen far short of the regular budget, the Agency had been forced to continue the austerity measures introduced in previous years and to reduce expenditure to match income. It had not been possible to allocate any funds towards building up the working capital or salary reserve.

10. By the middle of 2001, the Agency had been facing the prospect of a $66 million deficit by the end of the year in its regular budget for the year. Income for the year had been expected to amount to $280 million, against a budget of $311 million. At the informal meeting of the Working Group in New York on 14 September 2001, the Commissioner-General of UNRWA had said that the Agency faced not only the problem of a budget deficit but also a cash shortage which threatened its ability to meet its commitments in the remaining quarter of 2001.

11. The Commissioner-General had made every effort to keep donors informed of the Agency's financial situation. Many donors had once again in the current year responded generously to the special appeals for funding for UNRWA's regular and project budgets. To ensure a reliable income, UNRWA had appealed to donors to pay their pledged contributions earlier or at least on time. The budget format adopted by the Agency for the biennium 2002-2003 had been well received by ACABQ, which had recommended that the General Assembly should approve it.

12. The Working Group was pleased to note that UNRWA had made significant progress towards eliminating the structural deficit problem, in particular through the introduction of the 1999 Area Staff Rules. The Group welcomed the tireless efforts of the Commissioner-General and his staff to maintain the Agency's basic operations despite the shortage of resources, and also the Commissioner-General's efforts to raise funds and keep donors and host authorities informed about the actual situation with a view to opening new avenues of support and funding.

13. The Group was gravely concerned at the impact of austerity measures on the lives of Palestinian refugees, particularly in the areas of education and health. Additional austerity measures could only aggravate the already disastrous socio-economic situation of the refugees and increase the burden on the authorities in host countries.

14. The Group agreed that the problem of the refugees was rooted in the political problem which had originated more than half a century before and that it remained essential to resolve that problem once and for all in accordance with all relevant United Nations resolutions. However, the problems which the refugees faced every day were of a humanitarian nature and needed to be resolved by the entire international community. The services provided by UNRWA were the minimum required to enable the refugees to lead decent human lives. Any cuts in the level of assistance would not only deprive the refugees of vital services but would also have a destabilizing effect on the entire region. In order to provide UNRWA with a secure financial basis, the Working Group strongly urged all Governments to contribute to UNRWA's budget, increase the size of their contributions and pay them on time, and also urged them to consider making special contributions to cover the deficit and build up working capital so that the Agency could restore services cut as a result of austerity measures, and to ensure that donor support for emergency-related and special programmes or capital projects did not under any circumstances lead to a reduction in contributions to the Agency's regular programmes or the diversion of funds from them.

15. **Mr. Jilani** (Observer for Palestine) thanked the Commissioner-General of UNRWA for introducing the report on the Agency's work and expressed gratitude to

him and his staff for the efforts they were making in a very complex socio-economic and political situation.

16. The policy of a total blockade imposed by the Israeli occupying forces on people, goods and humanitarian aid was further aggravating the situation of Palestinian refugees and leading to an increase in extreme poverty, a sharp increase in unemployment and a deterioration in education and health care.

17. The persistence of such a tragic situation and the escalation of the bloody Israeli campaign against the Palestinian people had given rise to a number of complex problems. Among them, mention should be made of the occupying Power's attitude to UNRWA and its staff and the obstacles which Israel put in the way of UNRWA's efforts to provide basic services and assistance to the population. Similar actions were the scandalous violation of obligations entered into by Israel before the United Nations and its obligations as an occupying Power, which were laid down in international legal instruments and international humanitarian law.

18. He paid a tribute to the work done by UNRWA in the current difficult circumstances, despite the obstacles created by Israel. UNRWA had acted in an efficient and responsible manner, providing emergency assistance to refugee victims, and had also issued a number of urgent appeals which had met with a positive response in the international community. Support should be provided at a level which would meet the Agency's requirements for its regular budget and emergency appeals.

19. In 1948, the General Assembly, in paragraph 11 of resolution 194 (III), had emphasized the right of the Palestinian people to return to their homes or to receive compensation. Since then, that right had been reaffirmed year after year. Yet Israel continued to deny Palestine refugees their rights, including the right to property and a home. At the same time, Israel continued to deny its responsibility for the grievous situation of the refugees.

20. The existing general norms in relation to refugees should also apply, in their entirety, to Palestine refugees. The fact that the situation in which they found themselves had arisen 50 years earlier did not in any way deprive them of the right to return to their homes and to have their property returned to them, particularly taking into account that the main cause of Palestine refugees' continuing distress was the position of Israel, which refused to recognize the rights of Palestine refugees, and its stubborn refusal to agree to any just settlement based on the principles of international law.

21. He underscored the need to guarantee the right of the displaced Palestinian population to return to the Territories that had been occupied by Israel since 1967, in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations, particularly Security Council resolution 237 (1967) of 14 June 1967. It had been intended that they would return during the transitional period, in accordance with the agreements concluded, but that had not happened because of procrastination on the part of Israel. That had become yet another factor undermining the Middle East peace process and casting doubt on the sincerity of the Israeli side. In his view, a just solution to the problem of Palestine refugees, guaranteeing their rights in the context of a definitive and comprehensive settlement, was an indispensable condition for the establishment of general peace and stability in the region.

22. UNRWA, with the experience it had acquired, could play an important role in solving the problem of Palestine refugees and alleviating their suffering. That role was acquiring ever greater significance in the current dangerous socio-economic situation. As the Commissioner-General of UNRWA had noted time and again, Palestine refugees were the most vulnerable section of the Palestinian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including Jerusalem, whether it was a question of the number killed and injured as a result of the bloody Israeli campaign or of the increase in extreme poverty as a result of the closure policy.

23. He also emphasized the important role of UNRWA in providing basic services and meeting the basic needs of refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. He greatly appreciated the humanitarian services provided by UNRWA and its staff, notwithstanding all the difficulties and risks, and their steadfastness and devotion to duty, and called on all donor countries to lend assistance and support to the Agency so that it could continue to provide basic services to all refugees and to ease their difficult situation. Lastly, he called on his colleagues to work together to ensure the approval in the Fifth Committee of the recommendations set out in the report of ACABQ on the budget of UNRWA.

24. **Mr. Hadidi** (Jordan) said that Jordan wished to assure the Commissioner-General of UNRWA of its commitment to cooperation with the Agency and its support for the Agency's humanitarian endeavours for the welfare of Palestine refugees. Among the United Nations agencies engaged in providing aid, UNRWA had shown itself to be one of the most effective: despite the reduction of its resources, the Agency had organized competent services responsible for education, vocational training, health care and social security.

25. The Palestinian question lay at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and a solution to the problem of Palestine refugees constituted the basis for a comprehensive and peaceful settlement based on international resolutions, particularly resolution 194 (III), which emphasized the right of refugees to return to their homes and to receive compensation. The Peace Treaty between Israel and Jordan stressed that the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people were one aspect of a comprehensive settlement.

26. The fact that UNRWA continued to be operational represented an acknowledgement on the part of the international community of its responsibilities in the face of the tragedy of Palestine refugees. The need for the Agency's existence would continue for as long as the reasons for its establishment persisted.

27. For half a century, the burden of caring for the refugees had weighed more heavily on Jordan than on anyone else. The Jordanian Government's expenditure on refugees was 5.47 times greater than the Agency's expenditure in the entire region, and any reduction in the services provided by the Agency would increase the burden on Jordan. In that connection, his delegation called on the international community not to allow contraction of the role and programmes of UNRWA until the question of Palestine refugees had been solved. It called on donor countries to continue to provide assistance to UNRWA and to ensure that the Agency received the US$ 26 million it needed in order to continue its work for the remainder of 2001.

28. During the period under review, the disparity between the volume of expenditure of the Agency and its income had increased. That was adversely affecting the level and quality of the services provided to Palestine refugees. Helping the Agency meant supporting the peace process itself, while reducing UNRWA services would have a negative effect on the peace process. The calls heard from time to time for a change in the Agency's priorities as a way out of the financial crisis were unacceptable since the needs in the areas of health care and education and the necessity of meeting basic human needs would not go away, particularly as the number of refugees was growing.

29. His delegation appreciated the sincere efforts of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA to increase the number of donors, the support of donor countries and the work of the Agency's staff.

30. **Mr. Cockx** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries of Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey, said that the Union highly valued the important work done by UNRWA and thanked the Governments of the host countries — Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic — for their constant support for the Palestinian refugees over more than five decades. The Governments of those countries, particularly Lebanon, had often paid a very high price for taking in and meeting the needs of those refugees.

31. The number of refugees whom the Agency was assisting continued to grow, and in 2001 had reached 4 million. At the same time the financial resources from which that assistance was provided were decreasing annually, and the political situation and security environment, particularly in the occupied Territories, were creating additional difficulties. The Agency's difficult financial situation was compromising its ability to assist the refugees. The volume of contributions pledged by the international community to the third emergency appeal was still insufficient, and the contributions to the regular budget were still too low.

32. The European Union was extremely concerned to note that the Agency was having to exist from hand to mouth without having even the minimum funds to cover its essential expenditure, despite efforts to increase the effectiveness of its management and its control over expenditure. The Union shared the concern of the Commissioner-General regarding UNRWA's critical financial situation, and considered that it was essential to strive to broaden the number of donors to the Agency. The European Union itself was the principal donor to UNRWA: the extent of its contribution to the regular budget, as well as to

emergency appeals, had amounted in the past year to US$ 200 million.

33. The European Union could only express regret at the obstacles faced by the Agency in its daily activities in the occupied Palestinian Territories. The Union had frequently approached the Israeli authorities with appeals to lift the closures in the occupied Territories and not to impede the development of socio-economic activities among the Palestinian population. It was high time that the freedom of movement of persons and goods in and between the occupied Territories was restored.

34. The European Union also deplored the fact that the Israeli authorities were making the task of UNRWA staff difficult, if not impossible, by blocking the access of humanitarian and medical convoys and causing damage to UNRWA infrastructures by their military actions. The Union also called on the Israeli authorities to transfer the amount of value added tax and harbour duties owed to the Palestinian Authority.

35. The closures of the occupied Territories were having serious economic, humanitarian and administrative repercussions on the Palestinian population. The fall in economic indicators showed how serious the situation was. In that connection, the European Union urged the parties to seek, together with the Commissioner-General, the speedy, practical and satisfactory solutions which would enable UNRWA to fulfil its mission.

36. The European Union congratulated UNRWA on the quality of services it had provided to the Palestinian refugees in spite of the difficulties hindering its work. The results achieved in the areas of health and education were particularly impressive.

37. Until such time as a comprehensive, just and lasting peace was achieved on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967 and 338 (1973) of 22 October 1973, UNRWA must continue to fulfil its mandate, for which it must have the necessary resources at its disposal. The European Union would continue to support UNRWA both politically and financially.

38. **Mr. Zaki** (Egypt) said that the General Assembly was embarking on its discussion of the first item pertaining to the Middle East on the agenda of its current session at a time when the tanks of the Israeli army were patrolling the streets of Palestinian towns and the bullets of the Israeli army were killing dozens of Palestinians. The delegation of Egypt was angered and saddened by those circumstances, and its feelings were deepened by the fact that in the corridors of the United Nations there was much talk of human rights, the rights of refugees and what States should and should not do to protect the right of the individual to a dignified life. However, all those sentiments lost their meaning when the issue related to the rights of Palestinians and Palestinian refugees. States which lectured every day on the need to defend human rights were turning a blind eye to the injustice and blatant violation of those rights by Israel — the occupying Power.

39. As for the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, the delegation of Egypt, firstly, condemned strongly the continuing violation by Israel of its legal obligations under international humanitarian law and under the agreements that the Israeli authorities had signed with the Agency, especially the agreement of 1967. Egypt implored the international community to stand unified in demanding Israel's commitment to its obligations, specifically relating to the freedom of movement of UNRWA personnel and their vehicles transporting humanitarian assistance.

40. Secondly, Egypt welcomed the steps taken by UNRWA to address the situation resulting from the total blockade imposed by the occupying Power in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. Egypt requested the international community, and especially those States that had the financial capacity to contribute, to assist in the alleviation of the effects of that inhuman blockade by contributing to the Agency's implementation of programmes and responding to its emergency appeals.

41. Thirdly, Egypt supported the proposed budget for 2002-2003 and welcomed the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) regarding its adoption. Egypt also supported the request to establish five new international posts for the Agency to be financed under the regular budget.

42. Finally, Egypt requested the Secretariat immediately to pay the sum of US$ 5.1 million which it owed to UNRWA in connection with the transfer of the Agency's headquarters to Gaza. The payment of that sum as soon as possible would be of great importance in light of the Agency's difficult financial situation at the present critical stage of its existence.

43. The Palestinian refugees had certain inalienable rights, in particular the right to return to their homes and the right to compensation, which were laid down in many General Assembly resolutions, starting with resolution 194 (III). A just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian question had to be based on that resolution. However, any discussion of a settlement and of peace currently seemed hopeless, given Israel's continuing occupation of Palestinian Territories, and it was therefore vital to remember that the services provided by the Agency to the Palestinian people in all fields were important and necessary. That fact obliged all donors to continue making voluntary contributions to the Agency's activities.

44. Egypt supported UNRWA's work and urged all donors and other members of the international community concerned about establishing peace in the Middle East to make efforts to ensure that the occupying Power refrained from its expansionist policies and chose the path towards peace.

45. **Mr. Ahsan** (Bangladesh) said that his delegation attached special importance to the activities of UNRWA, which should be highly commended, and welcomed the report of the Commissioner-General, which presented a comprehensive picture of the Agency's activities over the past year.

46. The reporting period had been marked by a high degree of violence in the Palestinian Territories and an increased burden on the inhabitants, and also strangulation of the Palestinian economy as a result of the restrictions imposed on movement. All those factors had led to an increase in the number of refugees being cared for by UNRWA. In that situation, the Agency had a special responsibility to boost the morale of the Palestinian people.

47. The delegation of Bangladesh was deeply concerned about Israel's interference in UNRWA activities, particularly the imposition of restrictions on the movement of its staff. In addition, Agency staff had been detained and subjected to attacks and harassment, and even the Commissioner-General had not escaped such treatment. Bangladesh strongly condemned those acts, which violated international law and the agreement between UNRWA and Israel, and urged Israel to lift all restrictions on the movement of Agency staff and not to interfere in their work.

48. Bangladesh welcomed the institutional reform undertaken by the Agency to enable it to respond more efficiently and effectively to the needs of the Palestinians. It also welcomed the expansion of microfinance and microcredit facilities in the West Bank after their successful introduction in Gaza, and would be happy to share its own experience in that field.

49. His delegation was alarmed to note that the Agency's financial situation had deteriorated as the Middle East crisis deepened. It therefore urged donors to respond to the needs of the Agency and provide it with financial assistance beyond their pledged contributions. Mindful of the needs of the Palestinians, Bangladesh recommended extending the Agency's mandate for another three years, and until a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian problem was achieved.

50. **Mr. Assaf** (Lebanon) said that, although UNRWA had originally been created as a temporary agency to provide assistance to Palestinian refugees, 50 years later the General Assembly was forced to renew the Agency's mandate once again, chiefly because of Israel's refusal to uphold the refugees' right to return to their homes.

51. The refugee problem was one of the major aspects of the Palestinian question, particularly for Lebanon, in whose territory 383,000 Palestinians lived, making up 10 per cent of the country's population. In that connection, he thanked the representative of Belgium, who had mentioned in his statement the difficulties faced by Lebanon as a result of its taking in such a large number of refugees.

52. Recalling Lebanon's position on the problem of Palestinian refugees, he said that, first of all, it was necessary to guarantee the refugees' right to return to their homes, which had been affirmed repeatedly in General Assembly resolutions. Secondly, Lebanon rejected the idea of permanently settling the refugees in its territory, since that would in principle violate the Lebanese Constitution because the actual number of Palestinian refugees exceeded Lebanon's capacity to receive them and also because the refugees themselves did not want to live in camps permanently, but rather stood by their right of return and their right to create an independent State.

53. The current situation was also exacerbated by the fact that Israel was impeding UNRWA and harassing its staff in every way possible. The Agency's report mentioned cases of detention of UNRWA staff in

violation of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, cases of shooting at Agency schools and damage to other Agency sites, the imposition of restrictions on movement between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which had affected even the Commissioner-General himself, and the non-payment by Israel of the sums it owed the Agency. Consequently, Lebanon urged the international community to put pressure on Israel to refrain from such violations in the future and to abide by the international conventions.

54. Lebanon greatly appreciated the services provided by the Agency to Palestinian refugees, particularly in the areas of education, health care and social assistance, and emphasized that it was important for the Agency to continue its work of registering the refugees and issuing them with identity papers which allowed them to retain their status as refugees and Palestinian citizens and to exercise their right to return to their homes in due course.

55. Turning to the Agency's critical financial situation, he noted that the current level of contributions was insufficient in view of the natural increase in the number of refugees. He therefore urged donors to increase their contributions to the Agency's budget.

56. In conclusion, Lebanon reiterated that the only way to solve the refugee problem was for them to return to their homes in accordance with General Assembly resolutions and international law, and reaffirmed its commitment to the establishment of a just and lasting peace, pursuant to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). That process had to presuppose an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan and the implementation of the right of all the refugees to self-determination and the creation of their own State.

57. **Mr. Alatas** (Indonesia) said that his country had been observing with deepening concern the progressive deterioration of the situation in the occupied Territories, which had drastically affected the lives of Palestinian refugees. It behove the international community to put an end to the inhuman carnage of innocent civilians and immediately to call on Israel to lift the restrictions on the movement of staff and goods in line with the agreements concluded between UNRWA and Israel and the norms of international law. It was Indonesia's steadfast conviction that there could be no settlement of the refugee problem unless there was a just and comprehensive settlement of the whole question of Palestine.

58. It was heartening to note that, in the conditions of a serious worsening of the economic situation in the occupied Palestinian Territories, the international community had acknowledged the urgency of the situation and had responded to UNRWA's appeals for emergency assistance to the refugees. UNRWA was to be commended for the fact that in conditions of dire budget deficit it was seeking non-traditional ways of minimizing its costs and striving to improve the efficiency and quality of its services, where there were clear achievements in the fields of education and health care, and the successful income-generation programmes.

59. If UNRWA's financial situation was not remedied, it would profoundly affect not only the humanitarian services provided to the Palestinian people but also stability throughout the region. Thus, it was of the utmost importance that UNRWA programmes be placed on a sound financial footing.

60. UNRWA served as a symbol of the commitment of the international community to the provision of assistance to the Palestinian people in its aspiration to realize its hopes and expectations. Indonesia remained convinced that the Palestinian people, thanks to the efforts of UNRWA, would be able to secure lasting peace, stability and development in its own homeland.

61. **Mr. Rani Ismail Hadi** (Malaysia) said that his delegation was greatly concerned at the deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian Territory, which was adversely affecting the Palestinian refugees in Gaza and the West Bank. The almost uninterrupted violence since September 2000 had taken a heavy toll in human lives and injuries.

62. The measures taken by the Israeli Government in the name of security had reached dangerous and untenable proportions. Protracted blockades and other measures to which the Israeli authorities in the occupied Palestinian Territories resorted often prevented the movement of UNRWA staff and the delivery of emergency relief. His delegation noted with concern that during the reporting period restrictions on the movement of Agency staff and goods had continued. It called on the Israeli authorities to remove those restrictions and to respect the agreements signed between Israel and UNRWA. It further called on Israel

to desist from taking further military actions and to seek a political settlement.

63. His delegation placed the very highest value on UNRWA's service to the international community over the past 50 years. It also commended the Governments of Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as the Palestinian Authority, for their assistance to the refugees.

64. His delegation was seriously concerned at the precarious financial situation of the Agency. In that regard, it firmly supported the proposal made in his statement by the Commissioner-General of UNRWA that Israel should transfer to the Agency US$ 15 million collected in value added tax and customs duties and US$ 6 million as harbour dues.

65. The delegation of Malaysia commended the serious efforts undertaken by the Commissioner-General in seeking increased contributions from traditional donors, as well as seeking to expand the Agency's donor base. In making its own modest annual contribution to the UNRWA budget, Malaysia urged Member States, particularly the developed countries, to continue or to increase their contributions to enable the Agency to fulfil its noble mission of alleviating the plight of the Palestinian refugees. It was to be hoped that the financial situation of UNRWA would improve in the months ahead.

66. **Mr. Maitland** (South Africa) said that his delegation commended the efforts of UNRWA to provide much-needed assistance to Palestinian refugees under difficult conditions. The services of UNRWA were all the more crucial as the economic and social hardship suffered by the Palestinian people was aggravated by the Israeli policies of closures and restrictions on free movement. His delegation was concerned at the negative effects of those policies on the Agency's work and called on the Government of Israel to make every effort to ensure the free movement of Agency staff and goods in accordance with the relevant agreements and international law.

67. His delegation believed that, in those circumstances, the international community should exert every effort to ensure adequate funding for the work of UNRWA.

68. His delegation unequivocally supported the struggle of the Palestinian people to attain their inalienable rights, including the right to return to their homeland and to have their own independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital. The right of Palestinian refugees to return to their original homes, enshrined in, inter alia, General Assembly resolutions, was of fundamental significance in the search for a just and durable settlement of the refugee question. That right had been reaffirmed at the recent World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

69. Lastly, Israel's policy of closures and restrictions on the movement of goods, persons and resources constituted collective punishment of a civilian population, which was expressly prohibited in the Fourth Geneva Convention. It was therefore incumbent on the international community to take steps to ensure respect for international humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian Territory in order to protect civilians.

70. **Archbishop Martino** (Observer for the Holy See) said that although both UNRWA and the Pontifical Mission for Palestine had been founded as temporary agencies, for over 50 years they had been labouring to assist Palestinian refugees. Unfortunately, violence in Israel and the occupied Territories continued to take innocent lives. During his recent pilgrimage to the Syrian Arab Republic, Pope John Paul II had declared that real peace could be achieved only through mutual understanding and respect among the peoples of the region and among the followers of the three Abrahamic religions.

71. During the recent incidents in the Christian towns of Bethlehem, Beit Sahour and Beit Jala, Catholic institutions and numerous houses had suffered shell damage. The Pontifical Mission for Palestine was making emergency grants to help residents with repairs or relocation. In that connection, Pope John Paul II had declared that violence was a path of death and destruction which dishonoured the holiness of God and the dignity of man.

72. Meanwhile, the students of the Pontifical University of Bethlehem had been able to complete the school year, the Pontifical Mission for Palestine had built and opened "Brotherhood park" in Gaza City, and a children's park had been opened in Bethlehem. With the assistance of European philanthropic agencies, the Pontifical Mission had been able to develop and fund programmes to put the unemployed to work.

73. His delegation hoped that, beyond addressing humanitarian needs, a solution would be found for the various multifaceted problems of the region, including the question of the Holy City of Jerusalem. His delegation reaffirmed the need for "internationally guaranteed provisions to ensure the freedom of religion and of conscience of its inhabitants, as well as permanent, free and unhindered access to the Holy Places by the faithful of all religions and nationalities" (General Assembly resolution ES-10/2). It called for greater international solidarity and political will to overcome violence in a region awash in weapons and appealed to the international community to help bring about a just resolution of the differences between the peoples of the Holy Land, who were all cousins in the Abrahamic faith. As Pope John Paul II had declared during his pilgrimage, the world looked to the Middle East with hope and concern, expectantly awaiting every sign of constructive dialogue.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.